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Jeffrey Shearier

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, jeff.shearier@gmail.com

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Engaging *Ecclesia*:

A Model for Training and Leading Circuits to Engage in Mission as *Ecclesia*

Jeffrey Edward Shearier

April 18, 2012

Concordia Seminary
Saint Louis, Missouri

Advisor [Rev. Dr. David Peter]

1/4/13
DATE

Reader [Rev. Dr. Victor Raj]

DATE

1/7/13

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
[Rev. Dr. Wallace Becker]

1/7/13
DATE

CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

ENGAGING *ECCLESIA*:

A Model for Training and Leading Circuits to Engage in Mission as *Ecclesia*

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY STUDIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
JEFFREY EDWARD SHEARIER

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI
April 19, 2012

Dedicated to the Glory of God and the Good of the Church in the name of my mother, Mary Shearier, without whose support I would not have begun this project, and of my mother-in-law, Gertrude Keiper, without whose encouragement I would not have completed this project, and in the name of Carson and Avery Parkinson, my grandchildren, who with all of the baptized are the new generation of *ecclesia*, whom I pray will benefit from this project.

I believe that there is one holy Christian church on earth, that is, the community or number or assembly of all Christians in all the world, the one bride of Christ, and his spiritual body of which He is the only head.

Martin Luther, *Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, 1528

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ABBREVIATIONS

GGP	Gospel Gap Paradigm
LC—MS	Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LSM	Large Start Model
RMD	Rocky Mountain District

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals contributed to this project. I would like to thank Anne Shearier for her encouragement and support during these years of the project and also for sharing in the Pastoral Leadership Institute experience and being my partner in life and ministry;

I would also like to thank the Pastoral Leadership Institute and its leaders, past and present. I would like to thank Norb Oesch for developing the Pastoral Leadership Institute to train pastors to serve congregations and advance the mission of *ecclesia* and for his encouragement to enter the Doctor of Ministry program as it became available through Concordia Seminary. I would also like to thank Steve Wagner as he continues to lead the Pastoral Leadership Institute in developing pastors to multiply leadership for *ecclesia*, for his encouragement to finish this course.

I am grateful to the Rocky Mountain District President, the Rev. Randall L. Golter, for conceiving the idea of the Gospel Gap Paradigm and for inviting me into the process of its development and implementation. His invitation and ongoing theological conversations initiated and encouraged the development of this project.

I am also thankful to Jeremy Jacoby, Dustin Lappe and Lenny Busch for their honest assessment of and personal stories about the Large Start Model. I thank them for giving me permission to include their stories and thoughts in this project.

The members of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado have been instrumental in this project. They have facilitated my participation with their financial support and verbal encouragement and prayers. They are my current experience of *ecclesia* and they are my joy to serve. I thank my God for them every time I think of them.

The Rev. Dr. David Peter has faithfully served me as my advisor through this project and the many years it has taken to complete it. I offer him my thanks not only for his wisdom and guidance and encouragement, but also for his friendship in Christ.

Finally, I would like to thank Stace Rollefson and Steve Turner, two of the three Amigos, who although they completed their projects before me, did not forget the last Amigo and met me regularly with their encouragement and support and friendship.

ABSTRACT

Shearier, Jeffrey E. “Engaging *Ecclesia*: A Model for Training Circuits to Engage in Mission as *Ecclesia*.” DMIN MAP., Concordia Seminary—St. Louis, 2012, 110 pp.

This Major Applied Project sought to measure if attitudes and understandings about what the church (*ecclesia*) is theologically and to apply that definition to the ecclesiology of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The author recounts his personal quest to match ecclesiology with the mission of the church. He also tells the story of recent attempts to encourage church planting in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at large and specifically within the Rocky Mountain District (a part of the national church including Colorado, Utah and New Mexico). He argues that all layers of church structure with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod should be understood as expressions of *ecclesia* and so are in mission. The project is developed around training for a new method of church planting, the Gospel Gap Paradigm.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” (Acts 9:31)

What does it mean to speak the word, “church?”

In the Smalcald Articles, Martin Luther claims that a child knows the answer to this question¹. While on one level this is certainly true, on another level there continues to be much confusion about what the church is. “Church” (Εκκλησια, *Ecclesia*) is often used to speak of individual congregations—“I attend St. John’s Church”—or to speak of the universal or catholic Church—the “one holy, catholic church” of the Christian creeds. Acts 9 seems to speak of a meaning in between the congregation and the “one, holy catholic Church” of the creeds. By the time that our Lord called Saul to serve as Paul, the Word of the Lord had multiplied. Certainly those baptized at Pentecost who’d gathered from the corners of the Roman Empire had returned to their homes. The Word and Spirit had worked to fulfill the promises of Isaiah 55 and men and women were gathered around the Gospel in those places. So, the “one, holy catholic Church” must have included believers gathered in places other than just Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

Luke is echoing the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 to let us know that now, through this one now called Paul; witnesses would carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. So this verse serves as something of a literary device to let the reader know what’s coming. Not only that, the Spirit has something else in mind. Luke’s words in Acts 9 let us know

¹¹ Martin Luther, SA 12:2 in The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Fortress Press (Minneapolis), 2000, p. 324.

something about the Church. *Ecclesia* describes not just a congregation in Jerusalem or the “one holy, catholic” Church in the world. *Ecclesia* describes the “church” throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. There is a “trans-congregational” use of *ecclesia* that is not only somewhere between congregation and Church in meaning; this “trans-congregational” *ecclesia* is engaged in mission: the Spirit is building her up and multiplying the number of expressions (congregations) of *ecclesia*. It is vital to the identity of this Spirit-breathed *ecclesia* to be in mission.

Engaged by *Ecclesia*: A Personal Journey

I was not always aware of the vitality of this identity nor was I aware of the Spirit’s call for *ecclesia* and her pastors to be in mission. I was in my late teenage years when the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter LC-MS) underwent the schisms that ultimately rent her into two bodies—the remnant LC-MS and the newly-spawned Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Admittedly, I was more concerned with parties and politics than I was with mission or ministry. When my pastor suggested the Holy Ministry as a destination for me, I laughed at him. I wonder if there was an echo of Psalm 2:4 when I sat in my pastor’s office some years later—following a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin—Madison and Master of Arts degree from the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor—with both mission and ministry on my heart. He certainly laughed. My personal mission was focused on ministering to college students who were as self-consumed as I had been. However, I couldn’t really anticipate what *ecclesia* and the *missio deo* would ultimately mean to me in 1980 as I drove my Ford Pinto into the driveway that led to Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri.

I was introduced through my seminary education to various manifestations of *ecclesia* in congregational form. My field-work congregation was a small, working-class group of believers near Lambert-St. Louis International Airport very concerned with establishing relationships in her neighborhood. My vicarage (internship) congregation in Tulsa was a larger, upper-middle class group of believers busy with defining what it meant to be Lutheran in the shadow of Oral Roberts University's Tower of Prayer. I became very familiar with the local definition of *ecclesia* through these experiences and, while the concept of something larger (the "one, holy catholic" Church) remained, the local definition really became my definition. Mission became something centered on the local congregation and executed by the local congregation.

My placement into the Office of the Holy Ministry came through the Board of Assignments of the LC-MS, and that vague concept of that larger meaning of *ecclesia* intruded rather dramatically into my awareness and life. That placement was to be pastor—the first (and only) pastor—to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Quincy, Michigan. This congregation was in struggle. It had split from a larger congregation in the nearby larger city of Coldwater, Michigan—not as a mission of that congregation, but as a splinter, breaking off in anger and distrust over several issues and episodes. This congregation was focused on survival and so its mission truly was itself. Even though the congregation had an inward focus, the larger expression of *ecclesia*—Circuit #35²—supported me. Through this experience, I grew aware that *ecclesia* functioned on scales

² The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is divided into (mostly) regional districts which are then subdivided into circuits—"a network of congregations that 'walks together' for mutual care, support, advice, study, ecclesiastical encouragement, service, coordination, resources, and counsel—all for the sake of greater congregational participation in God's mission." (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. *2010 Handbook*, 5.11.1, p. 198.) In the Michigan District, these circuits are numbered. Circuit #35 includes Branch, Hillsdale, and St. Joseph Counties. See Appendix Two.

somewhere between the congregation and the “one, holy catholic” Church. At this point, though, I only understood that function as caring and supporting.

I vacated my call to Prince of Peace and returned to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis to pursue the Master of Sacred Theology degree. My emphasis was in historical theology and my degree studies examined colonial Pennsylvania. The notion of a meaningful expression of *ecclesia* took on traction as I studied pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania German immigrants. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, these colonials found their German language to be a unifying factor. The various Reformed and Lutheran congregations exchanged pastors and their members worshipped in one another’s congregations. Two catalysts for change arrived from Europe. Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf began a preaching tour of back-country Pennsylvania, counting on the German language to both spread his version of heart-felt Christianity and unify believers across denominations. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg arrived in Pennsylvania about the same time. His task became one of uniting Lutheran congregations and pastors around Scripture and Lutheran Confessions. His founding of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1748 sorted those Lutheran congregations into a trans-congregational expression of *ecclesia*—it was more than congregations, as it provided a liturgical standard for those congregations, and less than the “one, holy catholic” Church. The Ministerium also had a mission outside of the local congregation.

I became associated with a local congregation while pursuing my degree, and left my studies in 1987 to be installed as pastor to St. Peter Lutheran Church in St. Louis. St. Peter had been a much larger congregation in her earlier years, but in 1987 had declined in numbers to fewer than one hundred members. Like Prince of Peace in Quincy, her

focus was on survival. Unlike Prince of Peace, her answer was outward-looking. One of the field education students assigned by the seminary to St. Peter was Vietnamese. He had a heart to bring the Gospel to his people who had settled in St. Louis. His heart warmed the hearts of the members of St. Peter and his mission became the mission of St. Peter—echoing Peter in Jerusalem—to speak the Gospel in different languages. St. Peter was joined by the Missouri District, the two south St. Louis circuits and Concordia Seminary in this mission. The “trans-congregational” church of Acts 9 had once again found its mission.

However, I had not yet connected with my personal mission for ministry. Because I felt ill-equipped to lead such a mission, I declined the call to serve as Missionary-at-large under the aegis of the Missouri District and accepted the call to serve Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of El Paso, Texas. Zion is a congregation committed to God’s mission—the *missio dei*. Zion is the mother of all Lutheran congregations in El Paso. Zion’s congregational identity has been formed by planting other congregations. When I arrived in 1990, Zion was engaged in supporting an outreach and church plant in the neighborhood in downtown El Paso where Zion had originated. Zion had also played an important role in the beginning and continuing support of the Rocky Mountain District’s Centro Cristiano de Ysleta—a Spanish-language mission center that serves believers on both sides of the U.S./Mexican border. I had left St. Peter because I didn’t know how to “do” the mission of *ecclesia* and was taught by the members of Zion that the church is engaged in the mission of the Spirit and Word by what she is. I also had the privilege of seeing *ecclesia* express herself in mission through the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League as I served both as Zone and

District Pastoral Counselor. How are the LWML and her zones or the Rocky Mountain District and her circuits *ecclesia*? If mission defines *ecclesia*³, are they *ecclesia*?

Leaving Zion for Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado was not the same as leaving St. Peter for Zion; I was now engaged by the questions of definition and expression of *ecclesia* and mission. I had been primed by the Word and the Spirit through ministry and mission in the local congregation to address both the problem and the opportunity presented by the geography and demography of the Rocky Mountain District. I accepted the first of several calls to serve Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado. My first call was to serve as Assistant Pastor and my focus was to be outreach and mission. Interesting to me was that Mount Olive's desire for outreach had an internal impetus—more members meant more giving units. At the retirement of the senior pastor, I was called to serve Mount Olive in the role of senior pastor. I had no experience serving a congregation with more than 300 members and I felt overwhelmed. I was also unsure of how to lead Mount Olive into a program for outreach that would correct the near-sighted goal of adding more giving units to a more missional goal. So, I applied and was accepted into the Pastoral Leadership Institute's class of 2001.

I entered the Pastoral Leadership Institute to learn of administrative skills and leadership techniques so that I could better serve Mount Olive's membership of over 1200 baptized souls. However, I received more than I intended. Those skills and techniques were delivered in the context of the mission of the congregation. Mission became my focus as I came back to Mount Olive as a "servant-leader." Recognizing

³ Georg Vicedom understands church and mission as "dimensions" of the Gospel: "The mission is not an independent dimension but can always and only be the result of the church's obedience to the Gospel. Thus, to question the legitimacy of the mission is to question the right of the church itself to exist." Georg Vicedom, The Mission of God: an Introduction to a Theology of Mission, Concordia Publishing House (St. Louis), 1965, p.1.

myself as a learner by avocation as well as vocation, I wanted a better theological matrix from which mission might be nurtured. Mount Olive voted to be willing to learn as well, so I enrolled into the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary. Mount Olive was presented with the opportunity to take the lead in forming a new congregation in southeast Aurora. I began my studies with the question, “What is mission and how does one focus it within the congregation to draw it out to plant another congregation?”

Events following my enrollment re-focused the questions about mission back to the definitions of *ecclesia*. The strain of devoting (and diverting) staff resources and transferring active members to the new church was difficult for Mount Olive. Those attitudes already present acted to focus attention on internal issues and congregational well-being at the expense of outreach. Together, pastors, leaders and members spent time re-examining and celebrating again what it means for Mount Olive to be *ecclesia*—Word and Spirit calling, gathering, enlightening, sanctifying and keeping us in true faith around the pulpit and altar and font. In the midst of this journey, I was appointed to serve as Circuit Counselor to the Denver Southeast Circuit. I found that the sister congregations were suspicious of one another and uncertain regarding their role together as *ecclesia* and as *ecclesia* with respect to the Rocky Mountain District. Brother pastors gathered around the Word and the altars of our several congregations—did this make us *ecclesia*? The old question was revived. We spoke together of joint mission projects and were encouraged to embrace and support the mission projects of the Rocky Mountain District connecting us with the Lutheran Church of Southern Africa. Was there any way that we were acting in that Acts 9 way—*ecclesia* in mission? If so, could this way of working together form the foundation for our circuit to act intentionally in mission as *ecclesia*? Could the

Rocky Mountain District reform the way that it does mission so that instead of acting as an agent of franchise—initiating church plants and supervising those churches as autonomous enterprises—could act as *ecclesia*? Answering this question became my passion.

The Problem Identified

The Rocky Mountain District (hereafter as RMD)⁴ of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter as LC—MS) covers a vast area of the United States. It is considerably larger than the regions of Judea and Samaria and Galilee. Much of the geography of the states of Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah (and the parish areas of the several congregations from Nebraska and Arizona that are members of the Rocky Mountain District) is desolate and remote—either desert, prairie, or mountain terrain. These areas are sparsely populated and served by a small number of LC-MS congregations. The urban areas of these states (including metropolitan El Paso, Texas) are home to many people groups—English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, those speaking African and Asian languages—as well as many people who are not Christian. The challenge of being faithful to Christ’s commission to His Church to be about His mission must face these realities of geography and culture.

In 2010, the President of the Rocky Mountain District, the Rev. Randy Golter, proposed an approach to church-planting that would help focus the district’s activities in meeting these geographic and cultural challenges. He considered the contemporary commercials that pitted one

⁴ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod divides itself into mostly regional districts for effective administration. The Synod is not advisory to the districts, the districts are Synod in that place—the constitution of the LC-MS is the constitution of the district and the bylaws of the districts are generally the bylaws of the LC-MS—variations may not contradict the bylaws of the LC-MS. There are thirty-five districts; all but two are regionally defined. See Appendix Two.

national cellular telephone company's coverage against another's. In those commercials, the companies compare their coverage versus the "gaps" in coverage by the rival. President Golter compared the "gaps" in cellular telephone coverage to the "gaps" in Gospel proclamation in the Rocky Mountain District. He coined the "Gospel Gap Paradigm" to describe this focus.

Intrigued by the articles in the 2009 Concordia Journal exploring what the Scriptures say about *ecclesia* and mission, President Golter began an exploration of the Scriptures himself. I was invited to participate in that exploration. In his "Questions about the Gospel Gap Paradigm" that he prepared for the Board of Directors, President Golter listened to Matthew 5:13 and wrote, "[t]he Church is called by God to be the 'salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world' The Church is God's tool to salt the earth with His Word.... The Triune God carries out this salting process through each of the seventeen Circuits in their region, acting and being Church in their context."⁵ In his "From the District President" column in the May 2011 *Peaks and Valleys* insert to the Lutheran Witness, President Golter engages the *ecclesia* of Acts 9 to speak of the circuits of the District engaged in the Gospel Gap Paradigm: "The church, though identified in multiple locations, is singular—one church. You might even put your region there.... So the church throughout the *New Mexico region of the Rocky Mountain District—that is, Albuquerque, Roswell, El Paso, Farmington*—had peace and was being built up." (Emphasis his)⁶ Not only is this regional *ecclesia* an expression drawn from the congregations, the Gospel Gap Paradigm relies on understanding the regional *ecclesia* included in the "one, holy catholic Church. In referring to Christ's promise to "build" His Church on Peter's confession in Matthew 16, President Golter writes that "Jesus was building up the church in 'Judea and Samaria and Galilee' just as He promised in Matthew 16:18, and as Dr. Luke describes in Acts 9:31."⁷ The Gospel Gap Paradigm expects the circuits and District to be *ecclesia* and to be in mission.

⁵ Presented to the Rocky Mountain District Board of Directors' meeting in September of 2011. Used by permission. See Appendix Five.

⁶ *Peaks and Valleys*, May 2011, page A. Available at www.ignitingchurchandcultureforchrist.org.

⁷ *Peaks and Valleys*, page A.

There remain significant challenges to further developing the Gospel Gap Paradigm and then implementing the paradigm as descriptive for mission in the Rocky Mountain District. At the district level, the Executive Director for Missions—a full-time position charged with overseeing and developing new missions in the district—vacated his position for a call to another area of service in the Church. Because of financial pressures upon the district budget, the Board of Directors chose not to fill this position but asked me to donate five to ten hours a week serving missions in the district. Fulfilling this request provided the access to both circuit and district to research the answer to my questions. Another financial challenge remains at the district level that resulted in the implementation of President Golter’s paradigm into district policy.

Due to the economic downturn that began in the national and global economies in 2008, congregational giving to the district’s missions and programs has declined considerably. This is not unique to the Rocky Mountain District, but the situation challenges the Board of Directors to be good stewards with what resources remain. Funds already committed to missions were reduced, and funds for additional mission starts were curtailed. The existing model for planting churches in the Rocky Mountain District, the Large Start Model, was set aside because of the need for a large amount of cash upfront—either from the district or from the budget of a Covenant Congregation.⁸ The Gospel Gap Paradigm (hereafter as GGP) proposes to reduce the district’s financial commitment and personnel oversight over new mission starts and increase the same at the

⁸ The Large Start Model was developed within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by importing an existing model for church planting, called the Association of Related Churches model. More information about the association may be found at www.arcchurches.org. The model involves a partnership between an established congregation that “covenants” with a church-planting pastor to support his effort financially and encourage members to join the church plant. The new church agrees to tithe back to the Covenant Congregation—or the District—for a period of years and those funds are set aside for the next church plant effort. See below under the discussion of the “Covenant Congregation.” See Appendix One.

circuit and congregational level. The focus on finances could lead the District's Board of Directors to think like a threatened congregation and worry about survival and so management and administration. The GGP also proposes to restore the District's identity as *ecclesia*, revitalizing the circuits to act as the "church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" to be "built up" by the Word and Spirit and be "multiplied."

Aside from the challenges at the district level, significant obstacles to the realization of the goals of the Gospel Gap Paradigm exist at the circuit and congregational levels. There is not harmony and, therefore, not cohesion or unity of purpose between the congregations of the circuits. The LC-MS Task Force on Synodical Harmony Report to the 2010 64th Regular Convention of the Synod identified seven aspects of this disharmony.⁹ This report was entitled a "Progress Report," so perhaps this challenge will be met at the national church-wide level.

While there is agreement and awareness within most of the congregations of their identities as manifestations of *ecclesia* (the Church), the agreement and awareness that *ecclesia* is also manifested in the circuit and district (and, perhaps, synod) is lacking. Reducing the understanding of the circuit-district-synod structure to merely a functional rather than ecclesial one has had an unfortunate result. Congregations often understand themselves as "independent franchises" operating under the corporate logo of the synod, hyper-extending the intention of congregational autonomy in the foundation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Congregations choose to act independently and so compete rather than cooperate with their sister congregations in Christ's mission. As a result, the initiation the coverage

⁹ "One People Forgiven," *Convention Workbook: Reports and Overtures, 2010*, Raymond Hartwig, editor, pp.74ff. Of these seven factors, certainly the first (Inability to Deal with Diversity) and the seventh (Distrust) directly contribute to the problem at hand.

of the “gaps” does not happen cooperatively, contrary to the witness of Acts 9, 12, and 13. Additionally, not understanding circuit and district and synod as manifestations of *ecclesia* has left the congregations with the expectation that participation in Christ’s commission extramurally is somehow optional—or at best, left up to the individual congregation. There is no agency to encourage or facilitate cooperation, strategic planning or development of resources for mission planting at a level higher than the congregation—truncating *ecclesia* functionally rather than following Scriptural examples.

The problem this Major Applied Project (hereafter referred to as MAP) seeks to address is that it is uncertain how the Gospel Gap Paradigm might be developed in a manner that is consistent with a proper understanding of *ecclesia* and mission and which engages congregational participation and excitement in Christ’s mission outside the walls of each congregation. The larger issue of how the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is *ecclesia*¹⁰ will stand as one of the presuppositions of this project. The specific goal of this MAP is to develop a training program that will encourage the circuits to act as *ecclesia* for their geographic locations in implementing the Gospel Gap Paradigm and engage in the *missio Dei* as they identify “gaps” in the Gospel “coverage” and strategize together how to extend the Church.

The Purpose of the Project

The major purpose of this MAP is to assess the change in understanding of and attitude toward the trans-congregational nature of *ecclesia* of those participating in the

¹⁰ Many argue that American culture and so also American church culture is entering a “post-denominational” period as American’s self-identification is less denominational. Thus, Synod may also need—out of urgency—to change her self-understanding to continue to speak to Americans. Understanding and living as *ecclesia* in mission at not just the congregational level but also at the Circuit and District and so Synodical level, may provide that means.

training process for a cooperative effort toward planting churches among the circuits of the RMD. This study may also provide useful insight and information for other circuit, district, or synodical leaders to guide them toward engaging congregations into mission to work together as *ecclesia* at the circuit, district and synodical levels.

This “Gospel Gap” agency will assist the congregations of each circuit in identifying “gaps” in Gospel “coverage” within the geographic areas of the circuits and to the unreached people groups within the parish areas of their member congregations. The members of the agency will be selected by each circuit. These representatives, called Circuit Mission Agents, will undergo training so that they can return to their circuits as agents for mission to excite the identification of the “gaps” in Gospel “coverage;” act as representatives of *ecclesia* on behalf of their circuits, congregations and the district; and, as a body, identify and prioritize the circuit efforts on behalf of the district, strategize together and resource the mission efforts both at the circuit and district levels.

As a result of their participation in the training which is an aspect of this MAP, it is hoped that the individual agents will experience a change in terms of training and attitude to plan beyond their congregational walls to the circuit boundaries to the district as a whole. It is hoped that they will also find themselves adequate to lead mission planting efforts in their circuit and at the district level. This change will express itself in an increase in engagement with ministry and the ministries that are trans-congregational.

The Process

The primary focus of this MAP is the recruitment, training, and return to the circuit congregations of the members of this agency. The recruitment of the members of

this group began in 2010. In August of 2010, a presentation of the GGP and the intended creation of this agency was made before the RMD Board of Directors. The permission of this body was sought to proceed with the gathering of the members to serve on this agency. Permission was granted to proceed.

The second step towards recruiting these individuals was taken the next day. A presentation was made to the Circuit Counselors' Conference, meeting at Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Aurora, CO. The discussion with the circuit counselors focused on two points: that the recruitment of this representative was the responsibility of the circuit counselor; and the question of whether or not this person should be a pastor. The answer to this question was left up to each circuit. However, the training did include a component discussing whether Christ's gift of the evangelist¹¹ to the *ecclesia* falls under the call to public ministry or the baptismal call.

Another preliminary step was the development of a PowerPoint presentation, giving the circuit counselors "talking points" with respect to the GGP and further explaining what each circuit representative would be asked to do. That PowerPoint presentation was sent to each circuit counselor in early September of 2010. Seven circuits responded with the names of their representatives. Once the first set of representatives was identified, what became the first training session was scheduled for February 16-17, 2011. The questionnaire was sent to them inquiring about their understanding of and attitude toward mission as well as the Church's role in mission via email the week prior to the training¹². Special attention was given to the representatives'

¹¹ Suggestion made by the Rev. Dr. Robert Newton, President of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at a presentation made to the Rocky Mountain District Circuit Counselors' Conference, August 2010.

¹² The questionnaire was approved by my advisor, Dr. David Peter, on February 11.

understanding of and attitude toward the trans-congregational nature of *ecclesia*.

Responses to this questionnaire were turned in to me as the five participants arrived for the training. We met at the offices of the Rocky Mountain District in Aurora, Colorado.

The training borrowed the Covenant Congregation idea from the Large Start Model previously at work in the RMD. Under this model, the Covenant Congregation agreed to commit to the initiation and sponsorship of four new missions by 2017. That commitment would not be sought under the GGP, but the Covenant Congregation would commit to serving her sisters in the circuit as the focus of their commitment and conduit for their resources to cover the Gospel Gap that has been identified. Once the Circuit Mission Agent has been trained, the Covenant Congregations would be identified from within each circuit by the pastors and representatives of the congregations of the circuit under his/her leadership. In addition, and more specific to this MAP, the training program undertook to cultivate within its participants a positive attitude toward Christ's mission, an understanding of *ecclesia* that includes circuit/district/synod as more than structures with ecclesial functions, and a willingness to lead the circuit in becoming aware and becoming responsible for the lost souls in their region.

In addition to the segments on Covenant Congregations and the call of the evangelist, the representatives/agents were trained to better understand group dynamics¹³. These Circuit Mission Agents need to work together well and raise their focus above their respective circuits to the work of *ecclesia* throughout the District in mission. It is hoped that the District will benefit from this MAP through the work of this agency and mindset

¹³ While there is a great deal of literature regarding group and group dynamics, I have chosen to follow C. Wolfmueller's servant leadership models and research, as he has developed a matrix and system for Lutheran congregations and leaders, c. 2009.

of its members that will be changed from thinking only at their parish level to understanding that *ecclesia* includes their circuit and their District.

At the close of the final session of the training, a group interview of the participants was conducted under the leadership of President Golter which inquired about what they have learned and gained from the training, as well as what they see as areas for improvement. Special focus was given to the participants' understanding of and attitude toward congregations and districts working collaboratively as *ecclesia*.

On March 10, 2010, another questionnaire was distributed to its participants which to assess any changes to their attitude toward Christ's mission, understanding of *ecclesia* that includes circuit/district/synod (trans-congregational nature), and willingness to lead the circuit in becoming aware of and responsible for the lost souls in their region. About the same time as the questionnaires were mailed, President Golter and I met to consider the response of the circuit counselors to the Gospel Gap Paradigm. Of the 18 circuits in the Rocky Mountain District, only seven responded with the names of Circuit Mission Agents—and two of those individuals were not able to attend the training. We decided to schedule another training session for May 24 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.¹⁴ We netted five more Circuit Mission Agents into the Gospel Gap Paradigm offering this training.

Reflecting on the questionnaires and the discussion led by President Golter at the close of the first training, two decisions were made to change the presentation made in Albuquerque. President Golter emailed the five participants a paper presenting the theological presuppositions he had made orally to the participants in the Aurora session.

¹⁴ The training session was compressed into one day. The February session had begun at noon and concluded at four o'clock in the afternoon the first day and begun at nine o'clock the next morning and concluded by noon.

The other decision was made to not show the DVD presentation from the synod's Board for Missions on Covenant Congregations. The Aurora participants had not found that to be helpful and felt it more helpful to explain the Covenant Congregations the way the GGP used them. President Golter and I were also surprised that the Aurora group of Circuit Mission Agents were not challenged by our proposition that the circuits were indeed manifestations of *ecclesia*. As we presented the material at Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Albuquerque, we were careful to duplicate the rest of the presentation. Again, the questionnaires were electronically mailed to the participants the week before the training and June 6, 2010, following the Aurora example.

Project Parameters

The development of this model and process is designed to enhance how the member congregations of the circuits of the RMD understand themselves as Church and to engage them actively and enthusiastically in Christ's mission in the geographies of their parochial responsibilities. There are some rather apparent parameters to this study. The study will include only clergy and lay members of the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The study will be further limited to those members who attend the training. The study is not designed to capture the attitudes of those who do not attend the training nor those who perhaps live in the region of the Rocky Mountains but are not clergy or lay members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The study is designed to teach those who participate a certain understanding of how the *missio Dei* and the *ecclesia* relate within the Gospel of Christ and widen that

understanding of *ecclesia* to include a level of *ecclesia* between the congregational level of pulpit, font and altar and that of the “one, holy, catholic” Church.

How that change in thinking is measured will also serve as a parameter—or limitation—for the study. The measurement of change will be made from a reading of the answers to the questionnaires and a comparison between the responses made before the training and those following. The measurement of change will be based upon how the author of the study interprets those responses. Whether or not the respondent answered both questionnaires will also serve as a parameter to this study—no comparison can be made if both questionnaires were not completed by each respondent.

This MAP is based upon a certain definition of *ecclesia*. This definition may be perceived as divergent from the traditional definitions taught within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and therefore held by the clergy and lay members of the Synod. However, the study holds that its definition is Biblical and Lutheran and will seek to change the understandings of the members of Synod who participate and train them to cooperate as *ecclesia* in the mission of planting churches or other Gospel outreaches.

Going into this project, there are some presuppositions:

1. Christ’s Church is not originally nor essentially a human organization. It is defined the Scriptures as the Body of Christ and confessed by Luther’s Small Catechism as a creation of the Holy Spirit.

2. Where His Church is, there Christ is giving His gifts of the Word at the local congregational level. Beyond the congregation is the shared, common confession of the Gospel which identifies *ecclesia* and has united the churches extra-

parochially in many times and places. The Gospel and the Church's common confession direct and shape the mission as Christ's mission by which the Church lives and serves.

3. The Church is the fellowship of the baptized gathered around the Word. Within this fellowship, two calls extend from Christ. While each call beckons to a different task, those called are equal under Christ in His Church.¹⁵ Christ calls both the baptized and the ordained into His mission.¹⁶

4. Following the Biblical example in Acts, mission is not just the task under Christ of the local congregation. Circuits should play the role that the house churches in Antioch and the Council of Jerusalem took and send missionaries to speak the Gospel to unbelievers.

5. Early Christians understood their mission geographically. The GGP expects circuits in the Rocky Mountain District to understand Christ's mission geographically.

Summary

Defining "what" *ecclesia* is is a matter for the Scriptures. Applying that definition is a task for theologians and churchmen. What began as a personal journey for me has become the basis for this Major Applied Project. Those in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have been comfortable accepting definitions of *ecclesia* at the local or congregational level and at the universal, catholic level of the "one, holy, catholic"

¹⁵ Hans Kueng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward), 1967, pp. 394 ff. Translated by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden. Hans Kueng speaks of the charisms for the community of believers and the diakonia of those who put their charism to use in service to and for the community. There is no room for power or rank in ministry—it is diakonia of the charismata of Christ.

¹⁶ Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing Company, 1974, p. 57. Feucht concludes, "All Christians are God's *called* people, God's 'clergy' in the world."

Church confessed in the creeds. That Scripture challenges us to leave this comfort to embrace and confess the “trans-congregational” church is one thesis this Major Applied Project will demonstrate. How that “trans-congregational” *ecclesia* engages in mission—planting new locations for *ecclesia*—pushes this thesis and MAP into action as the training to bring mission from the ideal into the real.

Because we humans do not willingly leave comfortable positions, demonstrating that the Scriptures and Lutheran theology support the existence of the “trans-congregational” church will be the first step towards engaging *ecclesia* in the Gospel Gap Paradigm and circuits acting together as *ecclesia*. The next step will be to investigate how human beings are engaged and trained for implementing the mission that results from the engaged *ecclesia*. Subsequent chapters will help the reader take the same journey to a better definition of *ecclesia* and become engaged in mission. The goal of the journey will be to follow in the footsteps of those Christians in Acts, living in the peace of the Lord and walking with Him so that the church is multiplied.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Introduction

Where does the definition of *ecclesia* begin? Is it a sociological definition or a theological one? If it is primarily a sociological definition, then *ecclesia* will find itself as an assembly of people and its definition rooted in human culture and decision. People will gather for reasons similar to other gatherings—clubs, sporting activities, political parties and the like. The Gospel would not necessarily be a factor in the motivation to gather, so the Gospel Gap Paradigm could be superfluous as a means to promote multiplication of gathering locations for people.

If, however, *ecclesia* is not primarily a sociological phenomenon but a theological entity, then its definition will begin with the Scriptures rather than human desire or need. What do the Scriptures teach with regard to *ecclesia*? Is the Gospel Gap Paradigm faithful to this Scriptural teaching about *ecclesia*? Does the Gospel Gap Paradigm rely on a right reading of the Scriptures—or is it something else?

The Gospel Gap Paradigm has its basis in a valid interpretation of Scripture. Lutheran exegesis understands the Scriptures to speak of the local congregation—whether meeting in a house or larger structure—as being gathered around the Word of God and the sacraments that connect believers to the forgiveness that Christ won on the cross. Lutheran exegesis also reads the Scriptures to speak of the “one, holy, catholic” Church—the universal body of believers gathered around the Word of God as the Body

of Christ, whether spoken of as Israel or as the Bride or the New Jerusalem. Traditional Lutheran exegesis recognizes structures between the local and universal churches but considers them administrative structures or gatherings of local congregations which derive their identity from the local congregations. But such traditional Lutheran exegesis has recently been challenged.

As the articles which recently challenged these presuppositions appeared in the July 2008 and Winter 2009 issues of Concordia Journal¹⁷, a “middle way” of talking about *ecclesia* was coined—the “trans-congregational church.” This different and yet Biblical way of talking about *ecclesia* stimulated thought in the Rocky Mountain District and discussion between President Golter and me that resulted in the Gospel Gap Paradigm. My personal journey into the definition of *ecclesia* and the discovery of those elements of that definition that could be useful in multiplying *ecclesia* here encountered the “road maps” of Biblical exegesis and systematic theology. No longer was my seeking for a different way to talk about *ecclesia* frustrated. Now, the Gospel Gap Paradigm gained an exegetical and a systematical theological “legend¹⁸” and vocabulary.

As the Gospel Gap Paradigm was developed through conversations between President Golter and me and in his articles in the *Rocky Mountain District Messenger* and essays to various circuit gatherings, we realized that we lacked the vocabulary to speak theologically and ecclesiologically. Using traditional terms like “district” or “board for missions” spoke of structures within which congregations operated administratively, but these words carried little ecclesiological meaning. We needed either to find a new vocabulary or to re-define the existing vocabulary to carry increased theological—and

¹⁷ *Ekklesia: A Special Issue*. Concordia Journal (34:3), July 2008 and *The Church—Voices and Structures*. Concordia Journal (35:1), Winter 2009.

¹⁸ “Road map” and “legend” continue the metaphor of the journey.

ecclesiological—meaning. We wanted “circuit” and “district” and “synod” to carry meaning beyond simply administration and structure. The articles in the Concordia Journal provided both the vocabulary we needed and the theological and ecclesiological support to meet the challenges we expected. We expected that, when we met the circuits of congregations and the members of the district board of directors, the idea that circuits could engage in mission as aspects of *ecclesia* would be rejected. This chapter explains the vocabulary and demonstrates the Biblical, theological and ecclesiological support that we developed for the Gospel Gap Paradigm and the workshops we created to teach circuits to engage in mission as *ecclesia*.

An Exegetical Analysis: Churches and Church

Old Testament usages

This study will begin by examining how the Old Testament antecedents to the New Testament concept of *ecclesia* contain both local and more transcendent (eschatological) expressions. In the Pentateuch, several words are used to describe the group of people that left Egypt and were given an identity at Mount Sinai. Those who came to be called, “Israel,” were described as *‘edah* or *qahal*. These describe the community of God’s people. *‘Edah* describes the entire body of people as in Exodus 12:19, when the instructions for eating the Passover and being ready to travel are given to all the people. While the Septuagint translates *‘edah* as *synagogue*, care needs to be exercised to not see *ecclesia* necessarily implied.¹⁹ The use of *qahal* is also not exclusive to describing God’s people ecclesiologically.

¹⁹ Wes Howard-Brook, *The Church Before Christianity* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, 2001), p. 17. The word is also used to describe a swarm of bees in Judges 14 that Samson finds in the carcass of the lion he’d earlier killed.

Wes Howard-Brook wants to press *qahal* into service to describe an elite group of ecclesiastics with an agenda to promote the restoration of the Temple operating within the congregation (‘*edah*). His argument that the post-exilic authors used this term specifically to describe those who wished to restore Jerusalem as the center of the worship of YHWH is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the suggestion that a group could operate within the larger group and still be considered part of the larger group suggests that the traditional discussion of *ecclesia* between the local and the “one, holy, catholic” Church has some foundation in the Old Testament.²⁰

Howard-Brook offers a better Old Testament vocable as an equivalent of the local church. Howard-Brook understands the Old Testament narratives to be the product of those reflecting on the Exodus and the Joshua-Second Kings story arcs in light of the Exile. In the redaction process, he argues that any differences between ‘*edah* and *qahal* have been taken over by the intentions of the editors. While his approach is contrary to an approach that receives the texts of the Old Testament as formative and normative for the community of God’s people—rather than being formed and normed by the community—his approach does lead him to look for alternative vocabulary to describe the faith-life of those not living in Jerusalem and fond of the Temple. He identifies the smallest unit of Israelite community, the *bet ‘ab*—the father’s house. The household is ‘the basic unit of [Israelite] society in which choices about religion and culture take place.’²¹

²⁰ He drafts Leviticus 4:13 (yes, he sees post-exilic editing of the Pentateuch as likely) into service, understanding a division between the whole congregation (*kol-‘adath*) and what appears to be a smaller, ruling body, the assembly (*ha-qahal*), p. 17. Again he points out the Septuagint’s apparent lack of concern about the distinction, since both are translated as *synagogue*.

²¹ Howard-Brook, p. 19.

A New Testament (and more theologically conservative) restatement of this definition in terms of *ecclesia* comes from C.K. Barrett. As believers lived in the years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, choices about religion and culture were re-interpreted eschatologically, missiologically and liturgically. The household wrestled with living between the Resurrection and the Parousia. The household reinterpreted the narratives of the Old Testament *'edah* and *qahal* to belong to the household, whose members now knew themselves to be *ecclesia*.²² The household becomes the unit of *ecclesia* in the early days of the New Testament. There is support for the traditional distinction between the local manifestation of *ecclesia* around altar, pulpit and font and the “one, holy, apostolic” Church.

New Testament usages

How does this Old Testament usage transfer to the New Testament descriptions of *ecclesia*? The Apostle Peter demonstrates the adoption of Old Testament terminology used in Exodus and Isaiah and addresses his hearers as members²³ being built into an *oikos pneumatikos* (a spiritual house). Can we make a connection between the *oikoi* (households) of the Old Testament and this *oikos pneumatikos* that is founded on the Living Stone, who is Jesus Christ in 1 Peter 2: 4-10?

Possibly we can—or at least, we may make an argument that Peter leaves an opening for an understanding of *ecclesia* between the local congregation and the catholic church. Even though 1 Peter is counted among the “catholic” epistles—those addressed to “the Church” rather than specific congregations (as Paul’s epistles are), Peter does not address all believers. His words are for “the elect who are sojourners of the diaspora of

²² Charles Kingsley Barrett, Church, Ministry and Sacraments in the New Testament (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1985), p. 77.

²³ 1 Peter 2:5

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.²⁴ By the time Peter writes, Paul's missionary journeys have also resulted in churches in other parts of Asia as well as Europe, yet Peter does not include them in what he writes about *ecclesia*.²⁵ He does not exclude them, either.

What does Peter intend with *oikos pneumatikos*? "House" can be interpreted two ways in Peter's usage. It can refer to a household or the building in which the household dwells. It can also refer to a temple, the place God's Presence abode without confinement.²⁶ Paul Achtemeier prefers an interpretation that bridges both meanings:

The context within which it appears—priesthood, sacrifices—suggests an intention here to describe the Christian community in terms of a new temple, perhaps in contrast to the old temple, one where God's Spirit is now truly present...Such an allusion to a new temple is, however, secondary to the description in this passage of the Christian community as the true people of God.²⁷

Likewise, even I. Howard Marshall allows that it "pushes the metaphor too far" to restrict Peter's usage to one level of understanding *ecclesia*.²⁸ Marshall offers the definition of "temple" as describing each congregation or the congregations collectively. If we recall Peter's audience is only a portion of the catholic church, we find room for the suggestion that the New Testament allows an understanding of *ecclesia* between the local congregation and the Church catholic.

The Trans-congregational *ecclesia*?

²⁴ 1 Peter 1:1

²⁵ Paul Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter in Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1996), p.85ff. Achtemeier—and others—draws attention to the fact that these areas are mentioned as regions represented by pilgrims in Jerusalem for the observance of Pentecost in Acts 2.

²⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter: The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1991), p. 68. Marshall sees an obvious connection with the appellations of "royal priesthood" and "holy nation" to suggest Peter's main intent is to understand *oikos pneumatikos* as "temple."

²⁷ Achtemeier, p. 156.

²⁸ Marshall, p. 68.

Jeff Kloha gives definition to this in-between understanding by arguing that the New Testament uses *ecclesia* in a third way.²⁹ In the Book of Acts, Kloha reads *ecclesia* to speak of this larger, trans-congregational definition of “church.” The author of Acts speaks of the “church” through-out Judea and Galilee as well as in Jerusalem. John Nordling agrees with Kloha’s assertion, connecting the use of *oikos* in 1 Peter to Luke’s use in Acts and Paul’s use in his letters to the Corinthians. Nordling writes that “Paul probably uses *kat’oikon* to distinguish these individual household-based groups from ‘the whole church’ (*hole he ekklesia*), which could also assemble on occasion [in Corinth], or from the still larger manifestations of the Christian movement, for which he could use the same term, *ekklesia*.”³⁰ Luke uses a singular noun to speak of what were most likely many gatherings in many locations. This third usage of *ecclesia* informs the presumption of this project—that circuits (and districts and synods)³¹ are *ecclesia*, not just an assignment of congregations into an administrative tool.

Jeff Kloha examines the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 to provide evidence that the churches of Christ understood themselves together to be something larger than just what they were locally. The question is, though, whether that “something else” is less than the “one, holy, catholic” church and more than those gatherings around the Word as preached and administered in the Sacraments in homes. Kloha examines the gathering in Jerusalem and concludes that those first century Christians understood themselves to be gathering as what Kloha terms the “trans-congregational” church. We need to look at

²⁹ Jeffrey Kloha, “The Trans-Congregational Church in the New Testament,” *Concordia Journal* (34:3), July 2008, pp. 173ff.

³⁰ John Nordling, in an email to RMD President Randall Golter, dated August 4, 2008. President Golter had asked Dr. Nordling to comment on Kloha’s article, especially in light of Acts 9. Used by permission. Anglicization of the Greek is Nordling’s.

³¹ Nordling, August 4, 2008 email: “Hence, if forced to choose, I definitely would say that “synod” is church....”

Acts 15 to discern if this is true and how it might serve the Gospel Gap Paradigm.³² If the Gospel Gap Paradigm is consistent with Holy Scripture, then, it can serve the Church—at all of her manifestations.

There was a disagreement in the teaching about the Gentile converts to the church: the churches in Antioch were perceived by some in Jerusalem as teaching something different than the churches in Jerusalem about welcoming the Gentiles. Representatives of the churches met.³³ Kloha sees it as significant that the invitation to the Council did not include all of the congregations—those founded by Paul and Barnabas were not invited. Not even every congregation in Jerusalem and Judea were invited, only those leaders (elders and apostles) who were directly involved gathered. Yet, the directives of this Council were accepted by all the churches.³⁴ The desire for unity in teaching speaks to an understanding of the eschatological, universal *ecclesia* gathered around the Word and the method of achieving that unity by gathering the leaders of the local churches into a trans-congregational assembly. Nordling argues that the desire for “oneness” in the church was sought and enacted at the trans-congregational level between congregations and between representatives of congregations, such as the Jerusalem Council.³⁵ Unity (“Oneness”) in doctrine becomes not only a basis for

³² Dr. C.F.W. Walther understands a parallel between the Council in Acts 15 and what constitutes a “synod,” in Dr. Walther’s First Presidential Address” (1848), included as Appendix D in the study document, Congregation-Synod-Church, pp. 41-42. While this will find fuller discussion in the section below, Walther’s understanding gives the GGP significant LC-MS support.

³³ Kloha suggests the “elders” who met with apostles were leaders of the Jerusalem house churches, who together could interpret doctrine as the *ecclesia*. Paul and Barnabas represented the Antiochene and the Galatian congregations alone.

³⁴ Nordling notes that Paul and Silas, as they commence the second missionary journey, “strengthen” the churches by delivering the decisions and directives to them for them to “hold on to.” These decisions, Nordling notes, were not considered optional by either their deliverers or recipients. John Nordling, “A Response to Jeffrey Kloha’s Study of the Trans-Congregational Church” in Concordia Theological Quarterly (73:3, July 2009), p. 271.

³⁵ Nordling, CTQ, p. 273. Nordling talks of how believers thought of themselves and their groupings collectively, not individually or autonomously.

identification with the trans-congregational manifestations of *ecclesia*, it also defines whether the congregation or group of congregations has membership in *ecclesia* or not.

This “oneness” also becomes an affirmation for the mission of Paul and Barnabas. The decision of the Jerusalem Council to “not trouble³⁶” the Gentile converts with the burden of circumcision or the requirements of Judaism accepts Paul’s and Barnabas’ missionary work among the Gentiles.³⁷ The Council then sends members of the Council along with Paul and Barnabas to share the letter recorded in Acts 15: 23-30. This “sending” has the effect of extending ownership and offering inclusion to the fruits of the mission work of Paul and Barnabas in the name of the trans-congregational church that was represented in Jerusalem. The *ecclesia* living in Jerusalem and Judea understands itself as part of the same *ecclesia* living in Antioch and Galatia. Also, the *ecclesia* living in Jerusalem and Judea supports the *ecclesia* living in Antioch and Galatia and encourages its missionaries. So, the trans-congregational church engages in mission and expands itself—through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word.

This concern for catholicity in teaching and for the unity of the churches as “church”—whether universally or trans-congregationally or locally—also informs the letters Paul writes to the churches. In 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, the actions of the Corinthians with regard to the Supper and order in the assembly are compared to the teachings of the wider church, and the Corinthians are rebuked for not living as “church.” Paul references “traditions” that he delivered to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:2 and seems to speak of an agreement in teaching held in common through-out the *ecclesia* in 1 Corinthians 14:33b. His practice would seem to support Professor Nordling’s contention

³⁶ Acts 15:19.

³⁷ The missionary work is also understood to have the blessing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15: 3, 4).

that the concern for “unity” is one of the “marks” of the trans-congregational church. So the Corinthians should not consider themselves as *ecclesia* by themselves, but part of the larger *ecclesia* of Paul’s missionary congregations.

Paul adds another dimension to the life of the trans-congregational church as he writes in 1 Corinthians 12 and to the Ephesians in Chapter 4. Paul speaks of the *ecclesia* as *soma*. As in the human body, so God has chosen to arrange the parts of the body of Christ in the *ecclesia*. Not just at the local level but also on the trans-congregational level, as Paul describes in Ephesians 4, God chooses “in the church” apostles, prophets, teachers and other offices of the Word.³⁸ God orders the parts of the *soma* in service to the Word. Assembling around the Word and serving it in doctrine and life leads to common confession and shared mission both within congregations and among congregations.³⁹

Summary

This project began as a personal journey of inquiry to understand how and where *ecclesia* and mission are connected. This journey was joined as I became the Assistant for Mission to President Golter to his search for a model for church-planting that was Biblically-supported, theologically sound and economically feasible. From that juncture, the Gospel Gap Paradigm was created. Before the Gospel Gap Paradigm could be adopted for use in the Rocky Mountain District, we had to satisfy President Golter’s guidelines regarding Biblical support and the theological foundation in the Lutheran

³⁸ Kloha, p. 178.

³⁹ Lathrop and Wengert suggest that this confession binds the *ecclesia* together at all levels: “because God is the central actor here, this local assembly will always be opening onto and participating in the one assembly of God of every time and every place...this gathering will seek to send and receive signs of its communion with the other assemblies. It will break open any tendency to let locality, local culture, turn in upon itself...Creeds are the confessions of an assembly in communion with other assemblies and the confession of the baptized as they join that assembly and communion.”³⁹

Confessions and the theology of the church. Now that we have examined both the Old Testament and New Testament usages and meanings of the various words that describe *ecclesia*, we have found the Gospel Gap Paradigm's expectations about *ecclesia* to be Biblically sound. My personal question regarding the connection of *ecclesia* and mission has also been supported. As we review the Lutheran Confessions and theological descriptions of *ecclesia*, we will discover if President Golter's second guideline can be met.

A Historical and Systematic Analysis of the Trans-Congregational Nature of the Church

Exegesis gives birth to the systematizing of theology. That systematizing, though, happens in a historical context and in response to that context. As a result, Systematic Theology is not identical with Exegetical Theology. What do the systematicians say about *ecclesia*? What do they say is the Church? Where do they say is the Church?

The Free Church teaching on *ecclesia*

Across the denominational and dogmatic divides of the "one, holy, catholic" Church there is great diversity in answering this question. The Free Church viewpoint confesses that *ecclesia* surely exists at the local congregational level. This is where the Spirit gives His gifts. This is where the Word is preached and taught. Here is where

ecclesia lives.⁴⁰ Helpful insights in how *ecclesia* behaves in the world and lives as a witness to peace and justice come out of this perspective.⁴¹

In this tradition, the Holy Spirit transforms the assembly into *ecclesia*⁴² and locates the *esse* of *ecclesia* in the local congregation. *Ecclesia* functions in almost the same way as catholicity does in more liturgical traditions. *Ecclesia* lives on a larger scale as fellowship (*koinonia*) with God and with other congregations. *Ecclesia*—on a parallel with the “one, holy, catholic” Church—exists only eschatologically with and in Christ. Using Miroslav Volf as one author who tries to develop an ecclesiology out of the Free Church movement, catholicity (unity of the Church) is the consequence of local congregations “opening up to one another” and thereby enriching one another, “thereby increasingly becoming catholic churches.”⁴³ A congregation that is not open to all other congregations—this would especially include an invitation to the Eucharist—is not *ecclesia* at all. In this ecclesiology, the trans-congregational church⁴⁴ may well be

⁴⁰ Often referred to as “Free” or “Believer’s” churches, these groups descend from the Radical Reformation more or less directly, understanding themselves to be the “true” church. Veli-Matti Karkkainen, in his book, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), pp. 58ff. gives a fair assessment of these groups—although he admits that because these groups are idiosyncratic by nature he has generalized characteristics to talk about them as a group.

⁴¹ Such as Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon’s *Resident Aliens* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989).

⁴² Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 129. “This Spirit-mediated relationship with the Triune God and with the entire history of God’s people—a history whose center resides in Jesus’ own proclamation of the reign of God, in his death and in his resurrection—constitutes an assembly into a church.” Volf does not deny the “one, holy, catholic” church, but defines the larger in terms of the local congregations. “Every congregation that assembles around the one Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in order to profess faith in him publicly...and which is open to all churches of God and to all human beings, is a church in the full sense of the word, since Christ promised to be present in it through his Spirit as the first fruits of the gathering of the whole people of God....Such a congregation is a holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” (p. 158)

⁴³ Volf, p.213.

⁴⁴ Certainly, the ecclesiology of Volf and other Free Church theologians like Hauerwas is not identical to the ecclesiology of Kloha, but there is a similar “space” between local assembly and the Body of Christ that can still be identified as *ecclesia*.

located where catholicity, fellowship and unity happen, between the local congregations/assemblies and that eschatological reality of the Body of Christ.

Roman Catholicism and *ecclesia*

The tradition of Roman Catholicism begins at the opposite end of the discussion. Rather than beginning with the local congregation to look for catholicity, fellowship and unity, Roman Catholicism—and other traditions who are like-minded—begins with the unity of the “one, holy, catholic” and Apostolic Church and understand the congregation to simply be the local manifestation of the catholic *ecclesia*. Unity begins in the fellowship/participation (*koinonia*) of believers gathered around the Word of God and the teaching of the Apostles. Writing a textbook for Roman Catholics, Sebastian Bullough, OP, begins with Acts 2:42 to describe the unity that is a result of the participation of the believers as *ecclesia*. Bullough describes two types or levels of unity out of Acts 2:42.⁴⁵ Juridical unity derives from the need for order in the things the believers shared together in common. The need for an order brought the need for government and the unity that government both establishes and maintains. Liturgical unity is the participation by the believers in the Eucharist and in worship around the Word and teaching of the Apostles. Holy Baptism brings the believer into fellowship and into both levels of unity. According to Bullough, wherever the sacraments are mediating grace—especially Holy Baptism and the Eucharist—there is *ecclesia*.

Before he was made Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger wrote much about *ecclesia*. In his Introduction to Christianity, he gives definition to *ecclesia* in his discussion of what he calls the last statements of the Apostle’s Creed. The “communion

⁴⁵ Sebastian Bullough, OP, The Church in the New Testament in *Scripture Textbooks for Catholic Schools, Volume IV* (London: Burns and Oates, Macmillan and Company, LTD, 1961), p. 55.

of saints” describes “the eucharistic community which through the body of the Lord binds Churches scattered all over the earth into *one* Church. Thus originally the word ‘*sanctorum*’ does not refer to persons but means the holy gifts, the holy *thing*, granted to the Church in her eucharistic feast by God as the real bond of unity.”⁴⁶ *Ecclesia* proceeds from the Holy Spirit, as the center of His work in the world through the two aspects of Baptism—Penance and Eucharist.⁴⁷ Ratzinger understands the Church as the community that gathers at one table with the risen Christ. The idea that the community itself had a unity grew into the concept of Church—and that unity assumed cosmic and eschatological dimensions that extend beyond the grave.

Ratzinger adopts Augustine’s principle of Biblical interpretation, *totus Christus* (the whole Christ) in developing his ecclesiology. Christ cannot be separated from His people. The idea unites Christology and ecclesiology by affirming the real connection of Christ, the Head, to the Church, His body. On the one hand, to speak of “Christ alone” is to forget the whole Christ, for Christ is united to the Church. On the other, to speak of the Church alone is also to forget the whole Christ, for the Church is united to Christ. In his theological and ecclesiological dispute with Donatists, Augustine saw the tragedy of institutional division in the Church. He and his opponents had different ecclesiological views, yet both sides claimed to affirm Orthodox Christology. Hence, Augustine made his ecclesiological case by appealing to Christology. From the standpoint of *totus Christus*, Augustine could accuse those who divide the Church of actually denying the

⁴⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*. Translated by J. R. Foster (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 257.

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, p. 259.

very incarnation of the Word⁴⁸. So, where the Eucharist is, there Christ is. Where Christ is, there is His Bride, the Church. Aside from structural realities, Ratzinger does not see “levels” of *ecclesia*, the local altar and the community’s possession of the Eucharist and the cosmic and eschatological feast are all with Christ and so Church.

Lutheran understandings about *ecclesia*

While both the Free Church and Roman Catholic ecclesiologies offer some help towards developing an ecclesiology that supports the “trans-congregational” church, we need to look between the followers Radical and the Counter Reformation for an answer. We look to the teachings of the Lutheran Reformation for an understanding of *ecclesia* which most fully expresses the Biblical understanding.

The Lutheran Confessions confess the Church and the churches as assemblies gathered around the preached Word and living somatically at the local, trans-congregational, and universal levels. In Article V of the Augsburg Confession, the confessors speak of how the life and mission of the Church is created and sustained by God.⁴⁹ His “calling out” of the Church is reiterated as the work of the Holy Spirit as that which creates and sustains faith. Articles VII and VIII speak to the life of the *ecclesia* on

⁴⁸ Ratzinger in his Introduction to Christianity, talks about the Church as being both the holy Church and also the sinful Church (p.258) both because of the sinfulness of many of her leaders and members in history and experience, but also because she is broken into local Churches. Ephraim Radner, as Episcopal bishop, agrees that the brokenness of the Church is the result of sin. This brokenness leaves the Church Protestant and Roman Catholic—and so argues against “levels” of *ecclesia*. The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p.1ff. Radner calls the whole Church to suffer with Christ the brokenness of the world of sin and to be shaped by repentance toward unity. His approach also focuses on the unity of the Church in Christ (*totus Christus*) and so is unhelpful for looking for systematic theological support for the “trans-congregational” church as existing “between” the local altar and the heavenly one.

⁴⁹ The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Fortress Press: Minneapolis), 2000, pp. 41-42. Taken from the translation of the German text.

several levels. The unity sought by the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 and underscored by Paul as he wrote to the Corinthians is confessed and sought by the Lutheran Confessors. The one, holy Christian *ecclesia* is constituted by Gospel purely preached and the sacraments evangelically administered.⁵⁰

Article VIII goes on to confess that where the assembly gathers, there is the Church and Christ still gives His gifts.⁵¹ Similarly in the Catechisms of Martin Luther, the *ecclesia* is the assembling by God of His people around His Word and gifts⁵²: the catholicity of God's monergistic ordering of the Body of Christ and the community of Spirit-led, Word-formed people are confessed. There is a mutuality or community of exchange: the *Una Sancta* acts as a mother, nurturing the individual believer into faith by providing the Word; and the individual believers, gathering into communities locally and trans-congregationally around the Word, are the "communion of holy people."

Article VIII confesses that the assembly that gathers around Christ and His gifts is a location. Neither the Augsburg Confession nor the Apology to the Augsburg Confession limits this location to geography. The Apology, in speaking of the "communion of saints" says this phrase was added to the Creed "in order to explain what 'church' means, namely, the assembly of holy people who share in common the association of the same gospel or doctrine and the same Holy Spirit, who renews, sanctifies and governs their hearts."⁵³ Reflecting on the various understandings of

⁵⁰ Gerhard Forde speaks to the sufficiency of the Gospel and sacraments as the basis for unity and community of the Church and the churches in his essay, "The Meaning of *Satis Est*," in A More Radical Gospel: Essays in Eschatology, Authority, Atonement and Ecumenism, edited by Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson (Eerdmanns: Grand Rapids, 2004), pp. 178ff.

⁵¹ Kolb, p. 42.

⁵² Charles Arand, "What are Ecclesiologically Challenged Lutherans to Do? Starting Points for a Lutheran Ecclesiology," Concordia Journal (34:3), July 2008, pp. 160ff.

⁵³ Kolb, p. 175.

“assembly” in both Testaments, we hear the Confessors not limiting *ecclesia* to only be about the local congregation or only be in terms of the *Una Sancta*.

Lutherans speak about *ecclesia* in terms of assembly. As they do, they can speak to the Free Church believers and to those believers who follow Rome. Because the assembly is around the Word and the sacraments, they have commonality with both the Roman Catholic and Free Church believers. Because the Lutheran definition of assembly is a community into which men and women belong and participate in Christ, they have an answer to twenty-first century moderns, who craves community but lacks a center—suffering from Augustine’s “God-sized” hole. Lutherans can offer participation in the God-sized whole. Gordon Lathrop and Timothy Wengert are two Lutheran theologians who speak about *ecclesia* as an assembly in the world and in Christ. Their discussion answers the Free Church expectation that *ecclesia* is the local church and also counters the possibly Platonic notion of Rome that the local congregation has no existence apart from the *Una Sancta*. They write,

“Most people want desperately a ‘Here it is’ on which to fix faith. God proclaims instead a man hanging on a cross, that is, God in the last place anyone would reasonably look. God joins us to that one’s death and resurrection through water and word and to his body and blood through bread and wine—a scandal! The alternatives to Luther’s understanding of the church are always ecclesiologies of glory—attempts to nail the kingdom of God down to a ‘Here it is!’”⁵⁴

The *ecclesia* assembles around Jesus’ death and resurrection through Baptism (“water and the word” referenced above) and the Lord’s Supper (“bread and wine” above)—the Gospel as the Confessions speak. Attempts to limit *ecclesia* to a “here it is!” are described as “ecclesiologies” and so theologies of glory. This author suggests that the

⁵⁴ Gordon W. Lathrop and Timothy J. Wengert, *Christian Assembly: Marks of the Church in a Pluralistic Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 25.

“levels” of *ecclesia*—local, trans-congregational and universal—can become attempts to limit *ecclesia* to a “Here it is!” Lathrop and Wengert would seem to caution against defining these levels with too much meaning: “...this means that the church will always have an order of some sort or another, but it does not consist in and cannot put its trust in that order.”⁵⁵

The Gospel Gap Paradigm will engage *ecclesia* in the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Historically, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has functioned as such a trans-congregational entity. The Synod’s Constitution invokes Acts 15 as a predecessor and so takes on a definition rooted in the biblical understanding of Church described above⁵⁶. Since the Council of Jerusalem acted on the local, trans-congregational, and universal levels as *ecclesia*, so would the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

C. F. W. Walther was a nineteenth century Lutheran churchman who was instrumental in founding the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and served as her first president. His thoughts on *ecclesia* formed and informed the self-understanding of the LC—MS. William Schumacher, in discussing the thought of C. F. W. Walther, traces Walther’s development from one who defined “church” on the basis of Martin Stephan’s leadership to a realization that the “visible church” is a confessional fellowship, existing trans-congregationally, linking and not limited to the local settings of font/pulpit/altar for the purpose of mission and confession.⁵⁷ C. F. W. Walther himself, writing under Thesis VI of his *Church and Ministry*, “...Scripture also calls the visible aggregate of all the

⁵⁵ Lathrop and Wengert, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Synod, 2010, p. 13.

⁵⁷ William Schumacher, “Thinking with Walther: Congregation, Synod, Church,” Concordia Journal (34:3), July 2008, pp. 194ff.

called, that is, of all who confess and adhere to the proclaimed Word and use the holy sacraments, which consists of good and evil [persons], ‘church’ (the universal [catholic] church); so also it calls its several divisions....”⁵⁸ So the order within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was not intended to constrain *ecclesia* and restrain mission, lest its ecclesiology become one of glory. Indeed, Article III of Synod’s Constitution lists mission as one of the objectives in forming the Synod.

Kurt Marquardt connects Schumacher’s discussion—and Walther’s—back to catholicity (and so, away from an ecclesiology of glory). Reflecting systematically on the New Testament usages of *ecclesia*—and reflecting as a theologian in the tradition of Walther and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod—Marquardt re-describes the local, trans-congregational, and universal expressions of *ecclesia* in systematic terms. The local congregation gathered around pulpit, font and altar is the *ecclesia simplex*—the simple church. These “simple churches” gather together in mission and confession trans-congregationally as the *ecclesia composita* or structurally in synods as the *ecclesia repraesentativa*. Marquardt explains that brotherly, evangelical love binds the churches together either as composite church or as representative church⁵⁹. The Council of Jerusalem stands as an example, gathered in the love of Christ. The Council of Jerusalem gathered as *ecclesia* for the sake of mission and confession. Living as *ecclesia* means living as both witness and confessional community at all levels of *ecclesia*.

⁵⁸ Walther, *Church and Ministry*, p. 77. Walther cites John Gerhard, a Lutheran Reformation-era theologian, who lets the figure of speech known as synecdoche to say, “there is ascribed to the whole church what properly belongs only to a part...” (p. 83.)

⁵⁹ Kurt E. Marquardt, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry and Governance*, Volume IX, *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, ed. Robert Preus (International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research: Fort Wayne, IN, 1995), p. 202.

Despite a well-articulated definition of the LC—MS as *ecclesia*, there appears to be a disconnect between the official position of the Synod and the way some pastors and congregations behave. Kurt Marquart identifies this disconnect as originating in changes in the way *ecclesia* was taught at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in the 1940s. He assigns primary responsibility for these changes to Dr. Theodore Graebner, who also served as editor of the Synod’s chief periodical, *The Lutheran Witness*. According to Marquart, these changes in Graebner’s teaching were revealed in the course of ecumenical dialogue with several state churches in Germany. In an essay delivered to the 1949 Bad Boll conference, Marquart quotes Graebner as saying,

The preliminary result of our considerations is that neither Lutheran World Council, nor EKID [the Evangelical Church in Germany],...nor the Synodical Conference, nor the Missouri Synod are church....If single congregations by combining with others from larger unions—synods—territorial churches—or, through delegated authority, alliances like the EKID or World Council, then they have that right from the same authority (1Corinthians 3:21) of their members; but what they form are not churches.⁶⁰

Graebner’s analysis became the content of his seminary lectures and the graduates of the seminary became pastors and, later, professors, that have served the Synod.

The influence of Dr. Graebner’s definition of *ecclesia* existing only at the local and universal levels can be seen in several places in the life of the Synod. In 1945, 44 Missouri Synod clergymen—several members of the St. Louis seminary faculty among them issued “A Statement” that called for a greater measure of evangelical practice throughout the Synod, a re-definition of prayer fellowship that was different from previously held Synodical definitions and a greater openness toward other

⁶⁰ Marquart, *Anatomy*, p. 54-55. Graebner proceeded from the “truism that *congregations* (regular assemblies of Christians around the means of grace administered by a divinely called public ministry) exist by divine command” to the false conclusion that “only congregations are really churches, but synods are not—as if congregations lose their churchly character when they act together as churches in synods!”

Lutherans. Thesis Six speaks to the understanding of *ecclesia*: “We affirm the historic Lutheran position concerning the central importance of the *una sancta* and the local congregation. We believe that there should be a re-emphasis of the privileges and responsibilities of the local congregation also in the matter of determining questions of fellowship.”⁶¹ The Statement rejects as “new” the treatment of Synod as something to which pastors and congregations should pledge loyalty, since such loyalty only belongs to Christ and His Church.

This position claims importance as part of the Study Document, “Congregation-Synod-Church” issued in April 2007 by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance appointed by then President Gerald Kieschnick. Number 14 of the document’s Basic Theological Principles claims that the Synod is “a human, but ‘churchly’ organization.” The document continues, “Although we sometimes speak of our Synod as a ‘church,’ it is, in fact, a human association of congregations and ministers, organized to support them and to act in their behalf as requested.”⁶² It would appear that what began as a change in teaching at the seminary in the 1940s became part of a document that sought to explain “basic theological principles underlying LCMS structure and governance” in 2007. That this understanding of *ecclesia* differs from that of Synod’s constitution and founding theologians—as well as Scripture—is the reason for the disconnect and dissonance in the Synod that impairs mission.

The Gospel Gap Paradigm as it is designed with the “trans-congregational” church in mind, seeks to correct this disconnect and address the dissonance by calling all

⁶¹ Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, ed. Carl S. Meyer (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 1964), p. 423.

⁶² Synod, *Congregation-Synod-Church*, p. 12.

levels of *ecclesia* in the Synod to the task of mission. The Gospel Gap Paradigm would present itself as an opportunity for *ecclesia* to live in mission at the local, trans-congregational, and universal levels. The previously cited articles in the theological journal of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, connect confession and mission. In the July 2008 issue of Concordia Journal, articles by Charles Arand and Jeffrey Kloha speak of how confession and mission shape not only the local and universal expressions of *ecclesia* but also that of the trans-congregational expression⁶³. William Schumacher illustrates that the Synod was conceived to serve confession and mission⁶⁴—as a trans-congregational expression of *ecclesia*.

Summary

So, the trans-congregational vocabulary offered recently by theologians in the LC-MS supplies the GGP with a way not offered before to address mission and confession at the circuit and district levels. Kloha offers the new vocabulary and Nordling fleshes out the meaning. Not only LC-MS theologians but other American Lutheran theologians, like Lathrop and Wengert, set us free from theological or ecclesiological limitations and definitions about *ecclesia* that would restrain us to imagining that mission and *ecclesia* happen only at the local or the catholic level.

If Walther, Kloha, Schumacher and Nordling are correct and Synod is *ecclesia*, then so, circuit and district are also *ecclesia*. Mission happens wherever *ecclesia* is, so the Gospel Gap Paradigm has the ecclesiological and theological grounds to engage the *ecclesia* at the circuit and district structural levels. If Lathrop and Wengert are correct in their examination of the needs of culture for an assembly into which they

⁶³ Charles Arand, p. 169 and Jeff Kloha, p. 183.

⁶⁴ Schumacher, p. 205.

can belong and participate—and certainly, the Scripture and the Confessions are correct in their assertion that people in our culture need the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins—then, the Gospel Gap Paradigm has the responsibility to engage *ecclesia* in mission for the sake of the lost.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

One of the underlying presuppositions of this project is that *ecclesia* and mission form and inform one another. Mission shapes *ecclesia* and *ecclesia* engages in mission and is faithful to Christ's commission and so finds definition in mission. How is mission accomplished?

Various methodologies and theologies of mission have been developed over the years⁶⁵. European mission societies were formed to take the Gospel to those areas that had been colonized by their nations. Mission and *ecclesia* have been institutionalized in some denominational methodologies⁶⁶ that have proven beneficial in some contexts and detrimental in others. Some other mission theologians have advocated models they believed faithful the New Testament and to what they understood the Apostle Paul did to connect *ecclesia* to mission⁶⁷. With so many models available, how should a church body choose?

The Gospel Gap Paradigm developed out of the experience of the Rocky Mountain District as it sought to sponsor mission as *ecclesia*. Previous methods of church planting changed as regularly as the district changed Executives for Mission on the district staff. Previous models generally fell into two categories: district mission

⁶⁵ Of great help in understanding the history and historical shifts in the theology of mission and the methodologies that grew out of those theologies is David J. Bosch's Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 1991.

⁶⁶ Roman Catholic (c.f. Bosch) and Anglican, see *Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, Second Edition (London: Church House Publishing), 2009.

⁶⁷ See Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1962. Allen criticizes other methodologies and unbiblical that don't follow his model developed from St. Paul.

board sponsored church plants or those church plants initiated by a local congregation—either by plan or otherwise.⁶⁸ This church-planting process left the district budget with a number of small, financially-struggling congregations scattered through-out the district to annually support.

Similar experience at the synodical level led the Board for Mission Services of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to look for new models and structures through which to sponsor mission as *ecclesia*. In 1998 a conversation began within the Board for Mission Services over just what mission work would look like in twenty-first century.⁶⁹ Dr. Robert Scudieri describes the realization the Board for Mission Services had contributed to the problem they were now diagnosing:

Districts and synod had done a great job of convincing congregations that we, the district, did mission work. We even asked them for their “mission money.” There was good reason for this—we could do more together than apart. We wanted to act “on behalf of” congregations in their mission efforts; however, too many times we were acting “instead of” congregations. Some LC-MS churches came to believe that they were not allowed to be in mission work, that they were not supposed to start new churches...we had aided and abetted a depletion of mission initiatives in our congregations.⁷⁰

These conversations within the Board for Mission Services to reform missions and engage individual congregations and laity resulted in a series of resolutions adopted by the 2004 Synod Convention. Following that convention, Synod President Gerald Kieschnick invited district presidents and mission executives to regional clusters to address the goals of what was now called the *Ablaze!* Movement. From these meetings,

⁶⁸ Mount Olive Lutheran Church, for example, was begun in 1964 as the then-Colorado District Board of Directors extended a Divine Call to the Rev. Ralph Phipps to serve as Mission Developer in the developing Eastridge neighborhood in Aurora, Colorado. The now-defunct Christ Triumphant Lutheran Church was founded by members of Saint John Lutheran Church, Denver, in 1996 that were unhappy with circumstances at St. John’s and left.

⁶⁹ Dr. Robert Scudieri, “Ablaze!—A Theology of Mission in Action,” Issues in Christian Education (39:2), Fall 2005, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Scudieri, p. 9.

fifteen districts set targets to share the Gospel with 20.5 million people in the United States and begin 1,250 new congregations.⁷¹ These goals captured the imagination of district mission executives who sought ways to meet these mission targets.

Looking for the Best Model for Church Planting

One model that captured the attention of these district mission executives came from the Association of Related Churches. In 2006, the LC-MS Pilot paper described the Association of Related Churches as “a church planting ministry” that has used what the Pilot paper calls the Large Start Model in planting 31 churches, “twenty-eight of them are considered successful, with a total worship attendance among them of about 10,000.”⁷²

On its website, the Association of Related Churches describes its mission:

Most people come to Christ through the formation of a local church than any other way. Multiply your missions giving by planting churches that will give to missions. Starting a new local church is the most effective way to make disciples.

We are an association of relational churches working with church planters, church leaders, and churches in transition to provide support, guidance and resources to launch and grow life-giving churches.

We are successful mentors and coaches, partnering with leaders and friends, to foster spirit-filled churches that work—that are relevant to the un-churched—and put one in every community.⁷³

The Association of Related Churches was formed in 2000, primarily under the cooperative leadership of the Rev. Billy Hornsby, who had developed a small-group ministry that had become a model for training pastors and the Rev. Greg Surratt of Seacoast Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Seacoast provided the initial funds for two church plants that followed Hornsby’s model in Birmingham, Alabama and Conway,

⁷¹ Scudieri, p. 11

⁷² ARC Executive Committee, North American Mission Enablers, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, “Association of Related Churches (ARC) Church Planting Model, LC-MS Pilot,” June 21, 2006. See Appendix One.

⁷³ “The Mission,” www.weplantlife.com/about/the-mission/

Arkansas. The model includes a 2% “re-investment” by the planted churches to fund future church planters.⁷⁴ The model appeared to offer the mission leaders of the LC-MS the answer to their search for a church-planting model that engaged the laity and provided resources for the 1,250 congregations to be planted.

The understanding of *ecclesia* exhibited in the web pages of the Association of Related Churches website would seem more consistent with that of the Free Church Movement discussed in the previous chapter than with that of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The emphasis upon the local congregation would seem to reduce the Association to a structure that supports the local congregation and understands the catholicity of the “one, holy, catholic” *ecclesia* to the task of building relationships between the local congregation and the lost.

So what is that rationale for the partnership between the ARC and the LC—MS? That answers seems implicit in the descriptive comments made by the Pilot paper introducing the model, “The model used by Hornsby contains elements that are well recognized in church planting circles. However, the model seems to deploy this knowledge in a unique way with exceptional results.”⁷⁵ With the challenge of planting 1,250 congregations and the promise of “exceptional results” by the ARC model, a partnership seemed optimal. In 2006, members of the LC-MS National Mission’s Blue Ribbon Committee for New Starts and the interested representatives from several districts met with ARC Director Billy Hornsby in Las Vegas, Nevada and the partnership begun and what became known within the LC-MS as the “Large Start Model” was received.

⁷⁴ “ARC History,” www.weplantlife.com/about/arc-history/

⁷⁵ ARC Executive Committee, p. 1.

The Large Start Model was adopted by seven LC-MS districts in a pilot program in 2006.⁷⁶

What is the Large Start Model?

What are the key elements of the Large Start Model?

The model puts a great deal of importance on the person of the church planter. The individual seeking to serve as a church planter undergoes a careful selection process and is trained at the “Church Planters Roundtable”—which was led, at the beginning of the pilot program, by ARC Director Billy Hornsby. The planter is held to “such a degree of accountability, and such a high expectation of success, that any potential planter that is not entrepreneurial would simply shy away from it.”⁷⁷ The model presumes that the planter will secure his pre-launch salary and benefits for three to six months, so the planter also cannot be shy about fund-raising.

The model anticipates the potential planter will have more positive personality traits than just entrepreneurship. The planter also submits to computer-scored profile developed by the Gallup Organization and his acceptance by the pilot program depends on how well he scores. Some of the aspects of the profile include: visionary; intrinsic motivation, ability to bring people along on the project and build ownership, demonstrated ability to build relationships with the unchurched and a demonstrated passion for mission and evangelism. He must also demonstrate a strong marriage (if married) and a strong faith.⁷⁸ The planter can be trained either at the seminary or in the

⁷⁶ The participating districts of the LC-MS were the Rocky Mountain, Oklahoma, Nebraska, English, South Wisconsin, Southern and Southeastern.

⁷⁷ ARC Executive Committee, p.4.

⁷⁸ ARC Executive Committee, p. 17.

field. The training course involves a two-year “Mission Planter Development Process: Basic Mission Planter Training, Collegial Groups, Edge Gathering, and Advanced Planter Training.”⁷⁹ It is interesting that this model, which places such an importance upon the person of the planter, was found attractive by a church body which theologically places such importance on the office of the ministry and work of the Word and Holy Spirit.

A second significant element of the model is that it “recognizes the need to place the planter in a ‘resource rich environment.’”⁸⁰ This element was developed by Billy Hornsby as what he brought into the ARC process—the mentoring small group. In the Large Start Model, this small group takes the form of the Church Planting Roundtable (a one-day conference), and is augmented by a mentoring/coaching program (the planter is matched with an experienced church planter for regular guidance and support). The planter is also supplied with specific program items, such as a model timeline, budget goals and other process-related information. The second two elements are supplied at the district level to the planter. As the Large Start Model moved forward in the Synod, the districts would also take over the first element and assemble the Church Planting Roundtable.

The Financial Plan is perhaps the most radical element of the Large Start Model. It is called the Large Start because the Financial Plan requires the planter to gather \$30,000 to \$45,000 from his own funds, from gifts from family and friends and from partnering churches. The Large Start Model follows the ARC example by providing matching funds to the planter—up to \$30,000. The sources of these matching funds may

⁷⁹ ARC Executive Committee, p. 17.

⁸⁰ ARC Executive Committee, p. 4.

be Lutheran Church—Extension Fund dollars⁸¹ funneled through the districts or the sponsoring Covenant Congregation. After the initial launch, the district or the Covenant Congregation guarantees income for the first year—on a schedule that declines quarterly.⁸² The model expects that offerings will reach a monthly average of \$5000 after six months.

At the end of the twelve months, all outside support is ended and the congregation is considered self-supporting. It is understood that this money is a loan that is to be repaid on a monthly schedule that becomes the new congregation's "World Mission" line item. Against a previous model that continues to fund the support of small congregations from the district's "mission" budget, the Large Start Model has a certain appeal—that the district support ends twelve months after the "launch" of the first worship service of the local congregation.

The Covenant Congregation is a key element in the Large Start Model. Where the ARC model expected the planter to partner with several congregations as well as with the ARC, the addition of the Covenant Congregation is unique to the Large Start Model as it was brought into the Synod. The definition of a Covenant Congregation suggests its origin: "An *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregation is a congregation that covenants with its respective district and also with LC-MS World Mission to plant up to four (4) congregations by the year 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation."⁸³ Robert Scudieri's comments that the desire to return mission and church planting to the congregations in 2004 perhaps explain why the Covenant Congregation was added to the

⁸¹ The investment arm of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that also loans money to congregations.

⁸² First Quarter--\$10,000 per month; Second Quarter--\$7500 per month; Third Quarter--\$5000 per month; and Fourth Quarter--\$2500 per month.

⁸³ Yohannes Mengsteab. *Ablaze! Covenant Congregations*. Handout included as Appendix III in ARC Executive Committee, p. 13.

Large Start Model. Again, the challenge to plant 1,250 new congregations seems to drive both adoption of the Large Start Model and the development of the Covenant Congregation.

Is the Covenant Congregation/district partnership an example of *ecclesia* in action trans-congregationally? Three of the six points defining the Covenant Congregations seem to anticipate a trans-congregational engaging of *ecclesia*. To be identified as a Covenant Congregation, congregations agree to a formal arrangement (covenant) with the district to work together within the Large Start Model. The Covenant Congregation also agrees to align its mission and strategy with the LC-MS World Mission National New Congregation Development and accept training from the synod's Center for United States Missions in California. These structural requirements would serve the mission better if there was an understanding that the congregation, the district, the synod and its entities were together aspects of *ecclesia* engaged in mission.

When the definition moves to describe the ideal profile of an *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregation, the basis of the profile seems more sociological than ecclesiological. While sociology can serve *ecclesia* and mission, the descriptors seem confused as to which discipline serves and which rules. The ideal profile includes such attitudes as a “mission vision,” intentionality in developing lay leaders, and, a sense of unity, harmony and purpose. The profile also speaks of the congregation demonstrating the “five pillars” of a healthy congregation: right person, right place, right vision, the right resources and the right structure.⁸⁴ There are some practical aspects to the profile that suggests sociological influences: the congregation shows steady worship increase and the

⁸⁴ Mengsteab, p. 14.

congregation shows conversion membership growth in adult confirmations.⁸⁵ The use of metrics to measure engagement and the focus on the measurable aspects of the congregation as qualifications for participation in mission suggests that the Covenant Congregation concept has more in common with a Free Church understanding of *ecclesia* than it does with a Lutheran exegetical and theological view. The Gospel Gap Paradigm was developed in response to this apparent discord.

We have thus far described the Large Start Model from the perspective of its constitutive documents and the comfort of an observer. How did the model work in practice? Did the model work in practice—as it sought to borrow elements and processes from a Free Church context and put them into service in a Lutheran context? The best answers may come from those who served as church planters and district mission executives and sought to engage *ecclesia* in mission under the Large Start Model.

Did the Large Start Model Work?

The question, “Did the Large Start Model Work,” opens itself to many answers. Listen to those on the “inside” of the model and you will hear many answers. For the purpose of this paper, the answer will be sought in whether *ecclesia* was engaged in mission. From a practical standpoint, were the goals of the Large Start Model realized in sustained church plants? From a theological standpoint, how was the church engaged in the plant? Was it only at the level of the local congregation, or perhaps between the local congregation being planted and the Covenant Congregation doing the planting?

To answer the question, input was received from three sources. A pastor who is involved in a sustained church plant in Aurora, Colorado that followed the Large Start Model was asked for his critique. A pastor who was involved in a church plant in the

⁸⁵ Mengsteab, p. 14

north-western suburbs of Denver, Colorado that discontinued and did not result in a sustained church plant was also interviewed. Finally, a district mission executive from one of the original seven districts—Oklahoma—was asked for his input.

Jeremy's Experience

Jeremy Jacoby was serving as associate pastor in an older suburb of Denver, Colorado, when the district mission executive approached him with the idea of the Large Start Model in 2006. He participated in the training offered and chose Frederick, Colorado, as the town in which to launch the new congregation. The congregation he then served agreed to assume the role of the Covenant Congregation—with the modification that Jeremy continued to serve as their associate pastor while he began work in Frederick. He and his launch team followed the protocols of the Large Start Model closely.

Using marketing data, the launch team and Jeremy sought to design the new congregation to appeal to the desires of the community. His data identified the most desirable characteristic the community was seeking was to be “family oriented.” The team chose the name, Family of Christ, for the new start and began advertising in print, mail and on the Web. They identified their mission: “To grow as a community where all may be loved by Jesus in word and action, believe in Him as their Savior and become His family to the world.”⁸⁶ These actions reflected the guidelines offered through the Large Start Model and the district.

Family of Christ Lutheran Church “launched” with Palm Sunday worship on April 1, 2007 with 140 people in attendance. The next weekend, 143 people attended

⁸⁶ Jeremy Jacoby, PowerPoint Presentation, “Marketing Presentation for RMD Large Start Churches.” Used by permission.

Easter worship services. However, worship attendance never again reached those numbers, averaging around 60 each week. The Large Start Model anticipates that by the Third Quarter of that first year of ministry, the congregation will average \$5000 monthly in offerings and increase going forward. Family of Christ peaked at \$1800 a week (\$7200/month) but declined after that to a level that prevented sustainability under the model. Family of Christ closed in 2010.

Jeremy was asked to “debrief” his experiences to the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain District in January 2010. He offered a “Top Ten List of things that ‘worked.’” On this list, those things that worked were tasks undertaken in the “pre-launch” phase of the Large Start Model, mostly in marketing Family of Christ to the community. He reported that the “basic idea” behind the Large Start Model can work if you “have the time and money to start large.”⁸⁷ His other comments speak of the benefits of following the guidelines—have everything “in place” at the beginning; becoming part of the community and having a recognized and unified brand to look professional.

When Jeremy speaks of those things that “need to ‘improve,’” his comments help answer our question about whether the Large Start Model engages *ecclesia* at levels other than the local congregation. His Number 2 on his list of the “Top Ten things that need to ‘improve’” desires “more of a local and district partnership. Perhaps a ‘sponsor’ congregation or even better a ‘sponsor’ circuit. (Sic)”⁸⁸ His comment suggests that the Covenant Congregation arrangement did not prove as advantageous as the model

⁸⁷ Jeremy Jacoby, “Report to the District Board on Large Start Model—1/26/10.” Used by permission.

⁸⁸ Jacoby, “Report.” Used by permission.

promises.⁸⁹ The Large Start Model—as implemented in the Family of Christ example—did not engage ecclesia at the trans-congregational level in the mission of the new church plant. While there are many reasons—some of them can be inferred from Jeremy’s list—this lack of engagement of the circuit congregations seems to have been one.

Dustin’s experience

Dustin Lappe accepted the divine call to serve Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in April of 2009. Cross of Christ had been launched earlier in 2005 as an outreach of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Aurora, Colorado. Mount Olive had begun the congregation as a second site for members of Mount Olive to gather for worship. The group that gathered wished to become a new congregation and the decision to follow the Large Start Model was made. Originally, an out-of-state land developer—who was Lutheran—had stepped up to back the venture both financially and with a donation of land for the new congregation. As the national economy began to falter, this developer lost his business and Cross of Christ lost the funds and, eventually, the land. The years in between strained the relationship of Cross of Christ with Mount Olive as resources (staff and financial) became difficult to provide. Mount Olive ended its relationship with Cross of Christ in 2008 and Cross of Christ chartered as an LC-MS congregation with an average attendance of 40.

Dustin was called to re-launch Cross of Christ. After his arrival in Aurora, the congregation stopped regular worship services for six months and focused their attention on properly implementing the Large Start Model. When they resumed worship in

⁸⁹ In Jeremy’s case, the Covenant Congregation was the one he was serving as an associate pastor. This congregation is in a different circuit than the circuit area in which Family of Christ was planted. He suggests that the model use a pastor already in the targeted circuit and one already living in the community.

September, they had gathered a worship team of musicians (under the leadership of Dustin's wife, Trudi), entered into an arrangement with a local movie theatre for a worship site, and developed a children's ministry to welcome children during the worship service. October's re-launch brought 140 visitors.

2009 and 2010 were years of fund-raising to keep Cross of Christ open—Dustin took a second job as a part-time teacher. In these years, several circuit congregations were able to offer some financial support and a congregation from Denver has offered both financial support and mentoring and coaching for Dustin. The Rocky Mountain District was also able to offer financial support in the form of grants and loans. Now, Cross of Christ is approaching an average attendance of 200 and is able to pay its bills and fund mission outreaches. To the observer, Cross of Christ is an example of the Large Start Model engaging the trans-congregational *ecclesia* in mission. Dustin was asked for his observations.

Dustin's critique is balanced. He understands the premise behind the Large Start Model is sociological and that premise can be useful to the Gospel.⁹⁰ He lists the high initial cost of the model as a significant negative—"for us it was about \$100,000 before even launching."⁹¹ The cost of launching strained the meager resources of the congregation and placed demands upon them that seemed unreasonable. For example, Dustin was told to aim for 500 members at the first worship service to assure sustainability. In reality, of the 140 people present only 90 or so had an interest in becoming part of the congregation.

⁹⁰ Dustin Lappe wrote a one-page article, "The Large Start Model As Implemented at Cross of Christ" at the author's request. Under "Positives" he writes, "The basic premise...is good. Start strong. See yourself as a church from the very beginning. Be self-sufficient (self-sustaining) as soon as possible. All of which is to allow you to reach the lost and make disciples."

⁹¹ Lappe.

He sums up his observations:

While the Large Start Model seems to work for some church bodies, for whatever reason, I have not heard any success stories in the LC-MS....If you were to ask me if I would use the Large Start Model again to plant a church, my answer would have to be “no.” I just feel like there are too many things working against the model. As I said, if all the pieces are in place it has the chance to be an asset. But from my experience that’s very difficult to do. And so by moving forward you are only setting it up to fail.⁹²

Dustin’s observations seem to echo Jeremy’s: the understanding of how *ecclesia* can be engaged in mission in the LC-MS is different enough from the understanding of *ecclesia* operating in and behind the Large Start Model to question the value of importing it.

Cross of Christ’s sustainability seems to result from the way that *ecclesia* became engaged, building relationships with congregations within the circuit and within the urban area and between those congregations and the district. The Gospel Gap Paradigm builds these relationships to engage *ecclesia* rather than see them happen accidentally.

Lenny’s Observations and Experience

Lenny Busch serves full-time as pastor to a church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and part-time as the mission executive for the Oklahoma District. He was in this position when Oklahoma agreed to participate in the pilot program with the Large Start Model. He appreciates the Large Start Model. His experience has taught him some lessons in his first implementation of the Large Start Model. He describes these lessons: Make sure all partners are whole-heartedly on board. Make sure candidates for church planting positions are fully vetted. When using the LSM, hold fast to numerical benchmarks. Estimate the current vitality of a project based specifically on the benchmark of small

⁹² Lappe.

group participation. Tie the release of funds to actual benchmark achievement.⁹³ The narrative Lenny provides is about the church plant that taught him these lessons.

Lenny shares how he sought to engage the neighboring congregations in partnering in the proposed church plant. However, one congregation was only mildly interested and once the fact that the other congregation wished to take on the project alone became evident, pulled out. The member of this congregation's staff who was interested was not a trained, ordained pastor and—at the time, the Specific Ministry Program was not yet available for *in situ* training of the man nor was the Gallup Organization tool made available until after the man had committed to the model. While he lists other problems—the planter was unable to engage enough people in small groups to support an adequate launch—Lenny's narrative would seem to support the contention that unless the *ecclesia* is engaged at the local, trans-congregational (in this case, circuit and seminary), and universal levels to support the church plant, sustainability will be difficult.

He adds that the plant continues as a small parish. The planter has completed the SMP training, so the condition of the congregation is about what he'd have expected under the former district mission board-sponsored model. He remains generally positive⁹⁴ about the Large Start Model and has proposed a new church plant—that considers seriously the lessons already learned. The new plant already has engaged the circuit congregations. The congregations have created a joint bank account into which

⁹³ Lenny Busch wrote his observations, "The Large Start Model," at the request of this author. His comments are used by permission.

⁹⁴ Busch, "ARC/LSM in Oklahoma: Take 2" on page 4 of his comments made at the request of the author. Used by permission.

they have all contributed. Engaging *ecclesia* in mission seems to be vital to church planting and mission sustainability.

The Gospel Gap Paradigm Developed to Engage *Ecclesia*

The Large Start Model has two major shortcomings. First, the high cost of the project that requires thousands of dollars before people are gathered for worship and hundreds of hours of volunteer and professional labor frontloads the project. While this was originally seen as preferable to spending thousands of dollars over many years to support a struggling congregation, the Large Start Model—from Lenny’s experience—doesn’t seem to guarantee freedom from incurring long-term costs. The second shortcoming arises from the dissonance between the understandings of *ecclesia* between the Association of Related Churches congregations and leaders and that of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. While there is a shared emphasis upon the local congregation, the ARC viewpoint understands the local congregation as *ecclesia* in a way that the LC-MS does not.⁹⁵

As the national economy began to falter in 2008, contributions from congregations—which were struggling to make their budgets—to the work of the Rocky Mountain District declined. The resulting reduction in resources led President Randall L. Golter to reconsider some of the budget allocations the district’s Board of Directors had approved. The result of this reconsideration was the realization that the Rocky Mountain District could no longer afford the cost of the Large Start Model. President Golter began

⁹⁵ The ARC viewpoint is consistent with Volf’s Free Church description of *ecclesia*, where the LC-MS and Lutheran theology understand *ecclesia* as living because of the Gospel not because believers have assembled in a place around the Gospel.

to consider alternative models for encouraging church planting in the roughly three state region of the district.

At the approximately this same time, Concordia Journal published the July 2008 issue devoted to *ecclesia*.⁹⁶ Jeff Kloha's article on the trans-congregational church attracted President Golter's attention. In the November 2010 issue of *The Messenger*, the official newsletter of the Rocky Mountain District, President Golter demonstrated the degree his thinking had been affected by the articles in the Concordia Journal:

One Church--because there is one God, and the one God is of three Persons whose mind is one, one in thinking (Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image ...") and in doing ("Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." Matt. 28:19).

As God is unified in His doing, so is His Church. The various locations where He preaches the Gospel and administers the Sacraments through His called pastors, even though their geographic locations may be a distance from each other, does not disunite their one work by the one God. His being and doing unifies all the doing of His Church.

How could it ever be, though, that His one Church acts as if it is merely united by some constitution or bylaws and, therefore, each individual church act as if it were an independent franchise that merely shares some kind of corporate logo? This would be unthinkable for the Lord and His baptized! The Church is one as is her Lord.⁹⁷

President Golter understands that *ecclesia* is not focused solely at the level of the local congregation. He argues that *ecclesia* lives through the Gospel and the Sacraments. So *ecclesia* unites congregations across geographical distances and so fills administrative structures (like circuits, districts and synods). These thoughts became the foundation of the Gospel Gap Paradigm.

The Gospel Gap Paradigm received its name while President Golter was traveling in New Mexico and found that his cell phone service provider did not have coverage in

⁹⁶ This issue has been referenced above, Concordia Journal (34:3), July 2008.

⁹⁷ Randall L. Golter, "Are We Independent Franchises that Share a Corporate Logo?" The Messenger, November 2010, p. 1.

his location. This “gap” in coverage led him to think of “gaps” in how well the Rocky Mountain District and her congregations covered their region with the Gospel. In a document prepared for the RMD Board of Directors in 2010, President Golter answers questions about the Gospel Gap Paradigm:

1. **What is the Gospel Gap Paradigm?** The Gospel Gap Paradigm is the proposed pattern for the Church’s (185) parishes in the Rocky Mountain District to carry out the Triune God’s mission in this region.
2. **What is the “Gospel Gap?”** The “Gospel Gap is where the Triune God’s Word of Law and Gospel is not heard, where the Gospel is not preached. The “gap” may be in town, city or region, or a people group, such as Hispanics, Ethiopians, Sudanese, etc.
3. **What is the Biblical basis for this work?** The Church is called by God to be the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13). Jesus says of her, “You are...” His words are descriptive of reality, the Church *is* the salt and the scope of the salting *is* the whole earth....The Triune God carries out this salting process through each of the seventeen Circuits in their region, acting and being Church in their context.
4. **How does this look in each Circuit?** The local Church—individual and collective parishes in a region—is to steward this salting in their place, the casting of God’s Word of Law and Gospel and the administration of the holy Sacraments. Each circuit then identifies, prioritizes, strategizes and implements the mission in their region....
5. **How does the GGP relate to our life together for mission needs beyond the Circuit?**
The Church is larger than one Circuit or District, or Synod, and yet each parish is Fully God’s Church. The living power of God’s Word (John 6:63) is evident in the Church wherever she is manifested. We must not become, however, extreme congregationalists or isolated circuits or districts apart from the larger Church by our polity or actions. The binding of course is not constitution or bylaws but the Word of God and the Confessions. Such binding is shown by the cooperative efforts of kingdom preservation and expansion. The GGP is just one cooperative effort....⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Randall L. Golter, “The Mission Plan: The Gospel Gap Paradigm. Questions about the Gospel Gap Paradigm,” presented to the Board of Directors in August 2010. Unpublished. Used by permission. Capitalization is President Golter’s.

President Golter engages *ecclesia* for mission across parish lines, circuit and district structures, meeting one of his objections to the Large Start Model.

The other objection to the Large Start Model was the high cost. President Golter explains that the Gospel Gap Paradigm provides various funding opportunities. Circuits may band together⁹⁹ to share the funding of the effort and they may also petition the Rocky Mountain District for funding. He describes the process:

6. Tell me more about Funding. As each Circuit stewards their mission field, they may ask and press their need to the Church at large (the collection of 185 churches represented by District) for additional funding. We do God's mission together as we are able! The request should be made to the District by October 1 of each year....Of course; a Circuit must show that they are invested in this mission effort through time, talent and/or treasure. The District will not see a high value to commit if the Circuits not invested themselves.¹⁰⁰

The costs of covering the Gospel Gap are no longer frontloaded into the model. The costs are shared by the circuit congregations and the district. While the Large Start Model also envisioned such sharing, the model came with specific costs inherent in the process. The costs of launching a new start under the Gospel Gap Paradigm are determined locally and cooperatively, case by case, not according to the structure of the model.

The Gospel Gap Paradigm meets the objections to the Large Start Model. In tracing the story of Ablaze!, Dr. Robert Scudieri explained that one of the goals of

⁹⁹ He tells the Board of Directors that the "Northeaster Circuit of the RMD, for example has identified the Hispanic people as a Gospel Gap....These churches have collected nearly \$55,000 to call a Spanish speaking pastor who will lead the effort....They may ask of the District for resources, including funding...." Golter, "Mission Plan."

¹⁰⁰ Golter, "Mission Plan."

Ablaze! was to create greater engagement for the laity.¹⁰¹ The Gospel Gap Paradigm is designed to meet this goal. President Golter writes,

5. How are the Laity involved? The Church must not deprive the laity of the joy of being involved in mission. The laity along with the pastors are called by God to steward the mission, as Church. They too must have eyes to see the harvest (John 4:35). They...will supply the eyes, ears, hands and feet for this mission effort, giving of themselves in sacrificial ways for the advance of the kingdom.¹⁰²

So, the Gospel Gap Paradigm is based on a Biblical understanding of *ecclesia* consistent with Lutheran theology, distributes the costs of church planting in a way that avoids the dangerous frontloading requirements of the Large Start Model, and, engages the full membership of *ecclesia*—as the GGP counts on lay involvement.

Does the Gospel Gap Paradigm Work?

The Gospel Gap Paradigm has moved from the status of “proposed” in August of 2010 into serving as the policy and pattern for the congregations of the Rocky Mountain District to carry out the Lord’s mission today. Engaging the circuit congregations to work together in identifying “gaps” in Gospel “coverage” in their ministry areas, the Gospel Gap Paradigm encourages them to prioritize and strategize how local resources might be put to work first. This work is led at the circuit level through the Circuit Mission Agent.¹⁰³ The circuit congregations then designate one of the congregations to serve as the Covenant Congregation.

The Covenant Congregation’s responsibilities are somewhat different than under the Large Start Model. As in the Large Start Model, the Covenant Congregation is the conduit for the funding of the church plant. However, there is no contractual relationship

¹⁰¹ Scudieri, p. 9.

¹⁰² Golter, “Mission Plan.” Again, capitalization is his. The numbering in the document includes two #5s.

¹⁰³ How these Circuit Mission Agents are recruited and trained is the subject of Chapter 4.

between the synod and the congregation. The Covenant Congregation supports the church plant according to the plan developed by the circuit, working with the Circuit Mission Agent. Since the circuits are not really a legal entity, they cannot serve as mortgagees. The Covenant Congregation owns any loans taken by the church plant until the new congregation is able to assume the loans itself. This is another similarity with the Large Start Model.

With the identification of the Circuit Mission Agent and the Covenant Congregation and the agreement on a mission plan, the circuit submits its plan to the district's Board of Directors by October 1 of the year before they plan to launch the church plant. The Board of Directors then considers the request. If the Board of Directors concurs, the funding requested becomes part of the District's Mission and Ministry Plan for the upcoming fiscal year. This process has been in place since the beginning of 2011. At this writing, only one request was submitted to the Board of Directors by the October 1 deadline.

This request was brought to the Board of Directors by a Circuit Mission Agent who participated in the Gospel Gap Paradigm training in Albuquerque in May of 2011. Evaluating this request can demonstrate two things: the thoroughness of the training the Circuit Mission Agent received, and, the effectiveness of the Gospel Gap Paradigm in engaging *ecclesia* in mission at the trans-congregational, circuit level. The request was brought by the Sandia North and the Sandia South circuits, whose area of ministry basically covers the Albuquerque, New Mexico, metropolitan area and some outlying communities. The Gospel Gap identified is in the southeastern quadrant of Albuquerque.

The process behind the request validates the training. The Circuit Mission Agent—the only layman trained thus far in the Gospel Gap Paradigm—was involved in the discussions from the beginning. He maintained regular contact with the Assistant to the President for Missions, seeking advice for implementing the GGP. The Sandia circuits often meet and work together. They appointed a steering committee to discuss the identification of Gospel Gaps with pastors from both circuits and the Circuit Mission Agent.

A pastor from the outlying community of Grants, New Mexico, had begun an a mission outreach in southeastern Albuquerque in July of 2009 that has flowered into two Bible studies, a “Back to Work” training program and a youth group. The steering committee agreed that this outreach was covering a Gospel Gap and sought to gather circuit and district support. The committee, with the backing of some of the circuit congregations, submitted the request to the district Board of Directors through their Circuit Mission Agent. The training proved effective as the steps were followed correctly.

Did the process engage *ecclesia* effectively? This question is more difficult to answer.

Certainly, people are being gathered around the Word through these mission activities. The request states that “hundreds of people” have heard the Gospel and are being discipled in God’s Word.¹⁰⁴ Apparently, *ecclesia* is forming and engaging people in the southeastern Albuquerque neighborhoods. The proposal tells the members of the Board of Directors that these early efforts seem headed toward the formation of a new

¹⁰⁴ Letter signed by Pr. Mark Kluzek and Circuit Counselor, Pr. Don Neidigk, introducing the request to the Board of Directors, p. 1. Letter is dated, October 27, 2011. While this was past the October 1 deadline, the Board of Directors agreed to consider the request.

congregation (proposed name, Lord of Life). The board members are also told that these efforts “have received the support and volunteers” from several circuit congregations.¹⁰⁵ Again, *ecclesia* is working together through these several congregations at the circuit level.

The reader will find some reason for concern in reading the request as he is told that “formal endorsement of the Sandia Circuits is pending.”¹⁰⁶ Sadly, the endorsement of the majority of the congregations did not come. This lack of a larger engagement of *ecclesia* in the Sandia Circuits led the Board of Directors to return the request to the steering committee. The lack of engagement was considered by the members of the board to be a warning sign that the funding model—which assumed each congregation would contribute—was not feasible. However, the fact that the lack of engagement of *ecclesia* was the cause of the return of the proposal suggests that the Gospel Gap Paradigm has matured as the policy and pattern for mission in the Rocky Mountain District.

Summary

This chapter sought to study the theoretical context of the Major Applied Project. Because the Gospel Gap Paradigm is very recent, the only literature available was written by the developer of the GGP and those trained to work within it. So, this discussion studied the predecessor model for church-planting in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod—the Large Start Model.

The Large Start Model was in large part borrowed from the Association of Related Churches. In considering the ARC and their model, certain parallels between the

¹⁰⁵ Letter, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Letter, p. 2.

mission and core belief statements from the ARC website and the Free Church understandings of *ecclesia* expounded by Miroslav Volf and others were noted. Dr. Robert Scudieri's story of the origins of the Ablaze! movement within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was heard. He explained that behind the Ablaze! movement was a desire to return church planting and missions to the level of the local congregation and engage the laity in the work of *ecclesia*. These concerns made the model offered by the ARC attractive—since it focused on the local congregation as the locus of mission and engaged the laity.

However, the Large Start Model came with two significant problems as congregations tried to implement it. The first was the need for a great deal of money at the beginning of the project. The second was a dissonance between the understandings of *ecclesia* inherent in the model as borrowed from the ARC and those found in Lutheran theology and ecclesiology. With few exceptions, the Large Start Model did not *engage* the *ecclesia* in the LC-MS or result in sustained congregations. Those exceptions were successful because the local participants in the mission deviated from the guidelines of the Large Start Model.

The Gospel Gap Paradigm has been developed within the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It was developed because leaders within the district saw the shortcomings of the Large Start Model. The Gospel Gap Paradigm avoids the large, initial costs of start-up required by the Large Start Model. The Gospel Gap Paradigm also flows out of a Lutheran theological matrix to understand and engage *ecclesia* in mission. As the GGP becomes more widely used within the Rocky Mountain District, its usefulness and validity as a pattern for the 185

congregations of the Rocky Mountain District to carry out mission as *ecclesia* will be further established.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

The purpose of this Major Applied Project is to assess the change in understanding of and attitude toward the trans-congregational nature of *ecclesia* among those participating in the training process for a cooperative effort toward planting churches among the circuits of the Rocky Mountain District. Earlier chapters have explored the Scriptural definitions of the trans-congregational *ecclesia* and discussed how different theological and ecclesial traditions have expressed these definitions. This study has also explored how *ecclesia* and mission are related. That relationship has created the need for methods and models for fulfilling the mission of *ecclesia* by planting churches.

The previous chapter presented the most recent model used for planting churches in the Rocky Mountain District and offered an evaluation of that model both in terms of practical results (is it effective in planting self-sustaining churches?) and in terms of those Biblical and theological definitions of *ecclesia*. The Gospel Gap Paradigm model was developed to succeed the Large Start Model and was designed to presuppose the trans-congregational *ecclesia*. In this chapter, the training course designed to introduce the Gospel Gap Paradigm and change attitudes regarding the trans-congregational understanding of *ecclesia* will be presented.

Engaging *ecclesia* in mission is the focus of this project. The Gospel Gap Paradigm has become the framework within which *ecclesia* will be engaged in the Rocky Mountain District. Because the GGP is new, some kind of training needed to be developed to inform the congregations of the new pattern for missions in the district. There is a structure within the GGP that requires the appointment of Circuit Mission

Agents, the designation of Covenant Congregations, and the cooperation of circuit congregations to identify, prioritize, and strategize how their Gospel Gaps might be covered. So, a training course that covered these steps needed to be developed. However, the training needed to be designed to change more than just the way that church-planting was done in the district. The training needed to change minds and attitudes about *ecclesia* and about cooperation at the circuit level.

The proposition of the trans-congregational church offered by Dr. Kloha had been accepted by President Golter and me and we were excited to incorporate his ecclesiology into the Gospel Gap Paradigm. While this “trans-congregational” ecclesiology has been widely discussed, it has not been unanimously adopted. A competing understanding that circuits and districts are simply structures established between the local level and the catholic level of *ecclesia* lingers¹⁰⁷. A view of *ecclesia* consistent with that of the Synod’s constitution—and the trans-congregational ecclesiology—was taught by Kurt Marquardt as he speaks of these structures as the *ecclesia composita* and the *ecclesia repraesentiva*, bound together by love¹⁰⁸. By connecting Marquardt’s—and so the Synod’s—ecclesiology with the “trans-congregational” ecclesiology, we hoped to demonstrate that the GGP was not introducing something new. The training needed to be designed to persuade those who would serve as Circuit Mission Agents to think trans-congregationally about *ecclesia* and to accept the GGP as way to be engaged in mission.

The focus on the local congregation—as was described in Dr. Scudieri’s article and also in President Golter’s *Messenger* article—has had a surprisingly negative result

¹⁰⁷ See pp.50-52 for a discussion of the competing ecclesiology taught by Theodore Graebner at the St. Louis seminary in the 1940s.

¹⁰⁸ Marquardt, p. 202. In Marquardt’s discussion, this “love” is no doubt intended to be consistent with Romans 9:3-9, in which love binds the members of the church together in Christ.

as one looks for unity in the *ecclesia*. The constitution of the Synod describes each congregation as an individual member of the Synod and as self-governing¹⁰⁹. This appears to have led to confusion and distrust between circuit congregations not just in the Rocky Mountain District. The realization of this fracturing of the ecclesial unity was reported at the 2010 Convention of the Synod.¹¹⁰ The training would need to be designed to offer suggestions for the Circuit Mission Agent to act to build unity at the circuit level.

The Design of the Study

The study was designed to qualitatively measure the impact of the training on the group to be Circuit Mission Agents. A questionnaire was developed to ask a few knowledge questions about the Gospel Gap Paradigm and the participant's knowledge about their circuit's activities in mission and the quality of the cooperation of the circuit congregations. The next set of questions specifically asked the participant's attitudes and understanding about *ecclesia* operating at the various expressions of the local church, the circuit, the district, and the Synod. The same questionnaire would be given to the participants at the end of the two day's training. The answers would be compared by observation, looking for any changes in attitude or understanding. Those changes would be noted and analyzed.

¹⁰⁹ Article VII Relation of the Synod to its Members, Paragraph 1, in 2010 Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation as Amended by the 2010 LC-MS Convention (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), 2010, p. 16.

¹¹⁰ "One People Forgiven," Convention Workbook: Reports and Overtures, 2010, Raymond Hartwig, editor, pp.74ff.

The second part of the study involved the roundtable discussion at the end of the training. Notes would be taken by me from the discussion generated by President Golter's questions. He would develop open-ended questions that would lead conversations on the participant's understandings of *ecclesia*, mission, and the cooperative spirit in the circuits. Those notes would be compared to the data analysis from the questionnaires. Any conclusions and recommendations would follow this comparison.

There are seventeen circuits in the Rocky Mountain District. Ideally, 17 candidates would be nominated by the circuit counselors. The circuit counselors had agreed to spend the months between August and January identifying these candidates. I serve not only as designer and implementer of the study but also a Circuit Mission Agent for the Denver Southeast circuit. Response was slow in coming from the circuits. However, President Golter and I decided to proceed with the training regardless of the number of actual respondents.

The Implementation of the Project

The training course was developed with these issues in mind. Three training courses have been offered thus far in the Rocky Mountain District. Two sessions were offered to train Circuit Mission Agents—one in February 2011 in Aurora, Colorado, area and the other in May 2011 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. President Golter and I led these two sessions. A third, abridged course was offered by President Golter alone to the Circuit Counselors gathered for the district pastor's conference in Breckinridge, Colorado in October of 2011. This Major Applied Project was developed to measure how

effectively the training accomplished the three goals: training Circuit Mission Agents, changing minds about the trans-congregational *ecclesia*, and building harmony among congregations to better engage the congregations as *ecclesia* in mission.

In August of 2010, President Golter and I began the process of developing the training. This month was crucial as the district's circuit counselors were meeting together for an annual conference and the district's Board of Directors were also meeting to consider the question of going forward with the Gospel Gap Paradigm. Both meetings were scheduled for the same week. Agreement that the Gospel Gap Paradigm would be the pattern for church planting going forward was needed from the Board of Directors. Support from the circuit counselors was needed to be able to recruit the Circuit Mission Agents and to be free to work within the circuits to accomplish the goals of the GGP. Following presentations to both groups, the Gospel Gap Paradigm was accepted.

Following the circuit counselors' conference, an email reminding them of the need to recruit a Circuit Mission Agent was sent to each of the circuit counselors. The date of February 16 and 17, 2011, was set, so the need to recruit was urgent. The email read in part:

When President Golter and I presented the Gospel Gap Paradigm to you at the Circuit Counselors Conference, we spoke of the need for each circuit to identify someone to serve the circuit and the district as—a temporary name—Circuit Mission Agent. This person would lead the circuit by raising mission awareness, helping to “scout” out new areas or people groups in your circuit's geographical area and train interested congregations/pastors in strategizing for and implementing and resourcing the mission start-ups.¹¹¹

In the presentation, we had left the decision whether this should be a layperson or a pastor up to the discretion of the circuit counselor.

¹¹¹ Email dated August 25, 2010.

I received the names of seven individuals from the circuit counselors. Later, a circuit counselor himself informed President Golter of his desire to attend. A month before the training date, I sent an email to those potential Circuit Mission Agents. This email included a summary of the Gospel Gap Paradigm prepared by President Golter attached as a file and this invitation:

Our district is redefining how missions are done. Instead of decisions being made in Denver by a mission executive, a new process is being developed. This process will gather the input of circuits, which will be charged with identifying potential areas or people groups for Gospel mission, and bring that input together to not only identify, but also strategize how these missions might be planted and mobilize resources—both locally and district-wide—to fund and support these new missions. I am inviting you to participate in this process. An article by President Randall Golter is attached to this email that invites you into the vision of the Gospel Gap Paradigm.

Your circuits have nominated you to represent them in this process. You are invited to attend a two-day training event in Aurora, Colorado on February 16 and 17. You will be trained to serve as a Circuit Mission Agent. You will have opportunity to shape this process as it develops and unfolds in our district. We will begin to redefine the mission process and brainstorm how we can do this for the Lord's Church with excellence.¹¹²

President Golter's executive secretary handled most of the communications following my email to handle travel arrangements and accommodations for those coming from out of town.

After this communication I had conversations with three individuals. One had a relative who was near death and would not be able to attend the February training. Another explained that the distance from his home—his congregation is the only Rocky Mountain District congregation in Arizona—was too great and he asked if I would send him the PowerPoint slides. The third cancelled a few days before the training session due

¹¹² Email dated January 18, 2011.

to a death in his family. As these individuals were all located relatively close to Albuquerque, New Mexico, President Golter and I decided to offer the training a second time later in the year in Albuquerque. Our training group that was to meet in Aurora would have five participants.

The conference was scheduled across two days. We would begin after lunch in the afternoon—to allow those coming from a distance time to travel. We would conclude before lunch the next day. President Golter and I agreed on a schedule. He would begin the training session with a devotion and a presentation on the story behind the Gospel Gap Paradigm and his hopes for the future of missions in the district. I would distribute the questionnaires for my project and give them time to fill them out.

Following the time for the questionnaires, I would present the PowerPoint presentation I had sent to the circuit counselors earlier in the year. The presentation had been slightly modified for the training—the original anticipated the GGP and verb tenses needed to be changed. President Golter and I had reflected further on the Gospel Gap Paradigm since August and had revised some of the slides. This presentation to the circuit counselors had been titled “Introducing the Gospel Gap Paradigm.” The revised presentation had the name, “Local Congregations and Circuits in the GGP.”

The Aurora Training

I designed each of the PowerPoint presentations to be brief. I wanted to take about twenty minutes for the presentation and then allow about twenty minutes for discussion. My plan was flexible, though, as discussion was generated by my comments about each slide. Even with that change, we were able to maintain our scheduled forty-five minutes for each topic.

The presentation, “Local Congregations and Circuits in the GGP” offered supporting verses from Scripture with the information about the Gospel Gap Paradigm. For example, the slide designed to raise awareness that circuits could be responsible for outreach in their region offered Jesus’ words in Acts 1—“...be My witnesses...”—to lead them to recall Jesus’ instructions to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth. We then spoke of how “Jerusalem” could be the parish area they thought of their “home.” “Judea” could be those sorts of outreaches they would quickly identify—those most like home or those closest and easiest to identify. “Samaria” could represent those opportunities they might overlook—ethnic groups that had settled in their region, or groups that clung to religions different than the Gospel, e.g., Muslims or Mormons. The “ends of the earth” reminded them that the ministry opportunities in their region did not isolate them from the rest of the district, but that together we could face these opportunities. (See Figure 1 below)

The Gospel Gap Paradigm

...be My witnesses in Jerusalem...

□ In your circuit, are there:

- Cities and towns in which there is no Lutheran presence so that the lost have no place close to them?
- People groups out to whom no Lutheran congregation is presently reaching and so the lost have no one preaching in their language?
- People going to hell because they haven't yet heard the Gospel?

Figure 1

Another slide reminded the Circuit Mission Agents that this was God's mission as it introduced the tasks they would undertake together with the verse, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD...," from Zechariah 4:6. This slide introduced them to the structure of the GGP. They would work with their circuits to identify those areas where there is no Lutheran presence. Together with the circuit congregations, they would strategize how to use resources within the circuit, such as congregations, pastor and other called workers to stand in the gap. The Circuit Mission Agents were reminded that the goal was to plant new missions and create preaching stations (if a congregation wasn't feasible).

This slide generated some conversation as those present began to brainstorm possibilities and share some ideas already being considered by their circuits. President Golter shared how the Northeastern Circuit was implementing a plan in which all the

congregations would share the cost of calling a Spanish-speaking pastor to work in Sterling, Colorado. These congregations had begun this work before the Gospel Gap was initiated and they agreed the program would fit into the parameters of the model. Other trainees shared things their circuits were considering or might consider. One (Au2)¹¹³ spoke of how their circuit was considering uniting to support the Hispanic outreach congregation in Denver, Cordero de Dios. We agreed that circuits could support existing missions as well as plant new ones—as the needs were identified.

This discussion transitioned nicely into the slide that introduced the task of serving as Circuit Mission Agent. This slide was one of those added through the discussions between President Golter and me as we further developed the Gospel Gap. This slide was not connected to a verse from Scripture. (See Figure 2)

Circuit Mission Agents

- Work with congregations in your circuit to identify potential mission opportunities—these may be new or existing
- Work with congregations in your circuit to identify resources to support these mission opportunities
 - ▣ May be that a congregation or several congregations team together to support financially and in other way
 - ▣ May be that circuit congregations contribute as a group to support the opportunity
 - ▣ May be that your circuit submits a proposal to the District for inclusion in the next year's budget

Figure 2

¹¹³ See Appendices Seven and Eight. Aurora Participants are designated AU1, AU2, AU3 and AU4.

The subsequent slides introduced one of the other issues we sought to address in the training. We wanted to introduce the Circuit Mission Agents to the ecclesiology of the trans-congregational *ecclesia*. The presentation began with speaking of the local congregation as the place where *ecclesia* lives around the Word of God and the Sacraments. Then, I spoke of how the local congregation is in mission—giving forgiveness (John 20) and bearing witness to Jesus (Matthew 20) and suggested that making this witness and living this mercy were two of the reasons congregations gathered into circuits. (See Figure 3)

Congregations and Circuits

- The Congregation is the location where God locates His gifts—Word and Sacraments with the Spirit at the altar, pulpit and font
- The Congregation is given the tasks of handling the Gospel of forgiveness (John 20) and bearing witness to the Gospel and teaching the nations (Matthew 28)
- Congregations gather into circuits not just for administrative purposes but to work together for the Gospel—mercy and witness—in the geographical area where they have been located

Figure 3

I was pleased that the following discussion seemed to agree that the circuits were not just administrative entities but were also structures in which witness and mercy were shared tasks.

I introduced the Covenant Congregation in the next slide. The Covenant Congregation had been a familiar part of the Large Start Model to some of the people present in the room.¹¹⁴ There was a DVD from the Synod, “Church Planting,” that we watched. I wanted the training to show some continuity with the previous model. There were features of the previous version of Covenant Congregations we wanted to import—that the Covenant Congregation would serve as a support and mentor to the church plant and serve as a conduit for funds. I also wanted to show that our GGP Covenant Congregation was different. I suggested that instead of working with the Synod, the Covenant Congregation would work with the circuit to support the new church plant together.

The final slide of this presentation introduced the trans-congregational *ecclesia*. I borrowed terms from Kurt Marquardt’s discussion rather than from Jeff Kloha. I wanted to start with what was familiar—and had been part of the participant’s seminary education—and fill the term with something new. When I talked about the Jerusalem Council and the other examples from Acts, I was able to teach the idea of the trans-congregational *ecclesia* filling the former terminology of *ecclesia composita*.

The discussion engendered by this slide was positive. While most of the participants had not read Jeff Kloha’s article in the Concordia Journal, they had read President Golter’s article in the Messenger and the handout he’d attached to the January email they’d received. I was prepared for any number of responses. However, those present for the training were much more supportive and accepting of the idea. One participant offered that this was how he’d viewed *ecclesia* all along. (See Figure 4)

¹¹⁴ One of the participants in the training was Jeremy, whose story was told in Chapter 3.

Church between Parish and Una Sancta

- Local or Simple Church—Gospel preached and sacraments rightly administered, gathered around pulpit/font/altar
- Una Sancta—the one Holy, Christian Church made up of believers on earth and in heaven; the Bride of Christ, washed in His blood—gathered by the Spirit around the Word
- Composite Church—bound by common confession and witness to the Gospel—evidenced in Acts as the churches met in Jerusalem for confession and Antioch for mission

Figure 4

Following this presentation, the group took a short break.

When the group re-convened, the district's vice president for the Lutheran Church Extension Fund made a presentation. He spoke of the different types of grants and loans that the LCEF was making available to congregations for church plants. There is a variety from which congregations may select. These loans were designed with the Large Start Model in mind, but the representative felt that the circuits could still explore funding under the GGP from the LCEF. He reiterated that the loans could not be made to unchartered church plants without collateral. He also reminded us that since circuits were not legal entities, they could not take out loans either. The Covenant Congregation would own the loan on behalf of the church plant and the circuit.

The segment that was presented before supper was titled, "How Do I Serve as a CMA? These slides were designed to walk the participants through the basics of the

tasks for which they'd been appointed. I let the first slide serve also to broach the other issue we wanted the training to address: harmony among the circuit congregations. (See Figure 5)

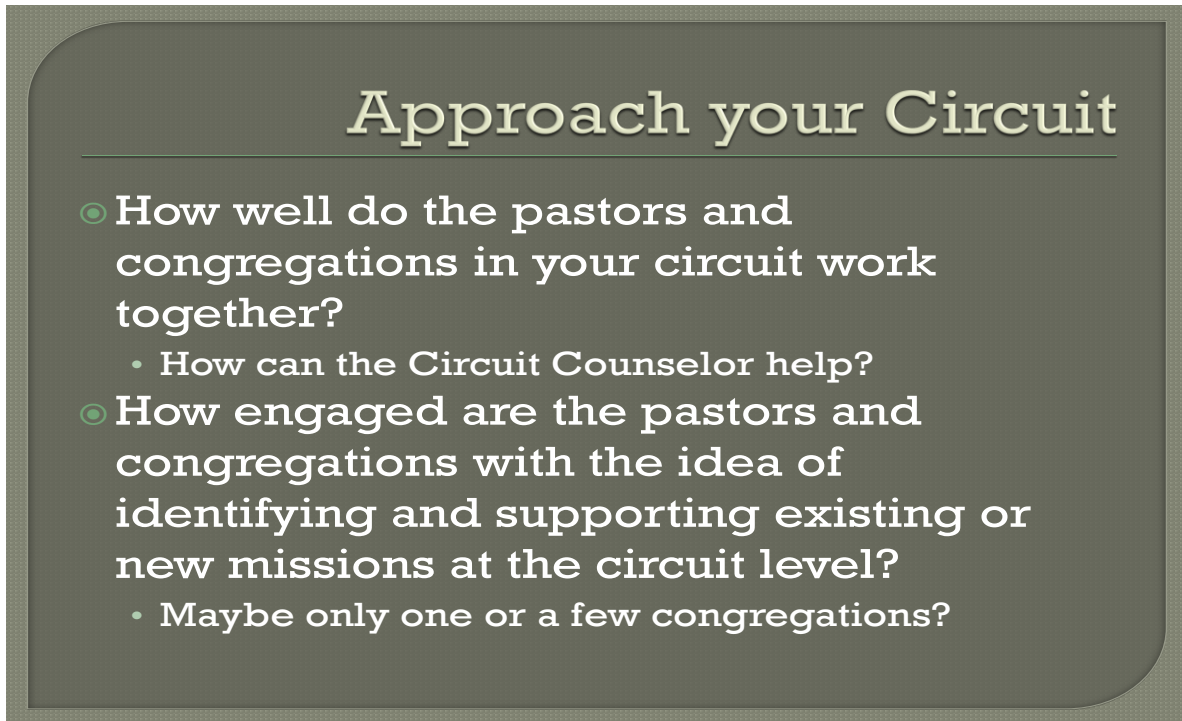


Figure 5

The two questions were conceived to draw out discussion from the participants. The representative (AU1) from the circuit already working together to support Cordero de Dios in Denver thought his circuit worked well together. However, the other participants didn't share in his experience.

Shared experiences showed division within the circuits represented. One pastor (AU4) shared how his congregation wanted to plant a church in a neighboring community—quite a distance from the two other LC-MS congregations in that town. Those two congregations felt threatened by this intention and had divided the opinion of the circuit on the proposal. (The community in question has over 40,000 in population.)

Another pastor (AU2) said that his circuit was divided over a number of issues and that several of the pastors did not attend the meetings of the circuit. He couldn't imagine them working well together. A third pastor (AU3) shared how the identification of a mission within their circuit had united the pastors in the task of an existing congregation that was struggling financially. The identification of a common mission seemed to bring unity and gave the opportunity for the trans-congregational church to be realized.

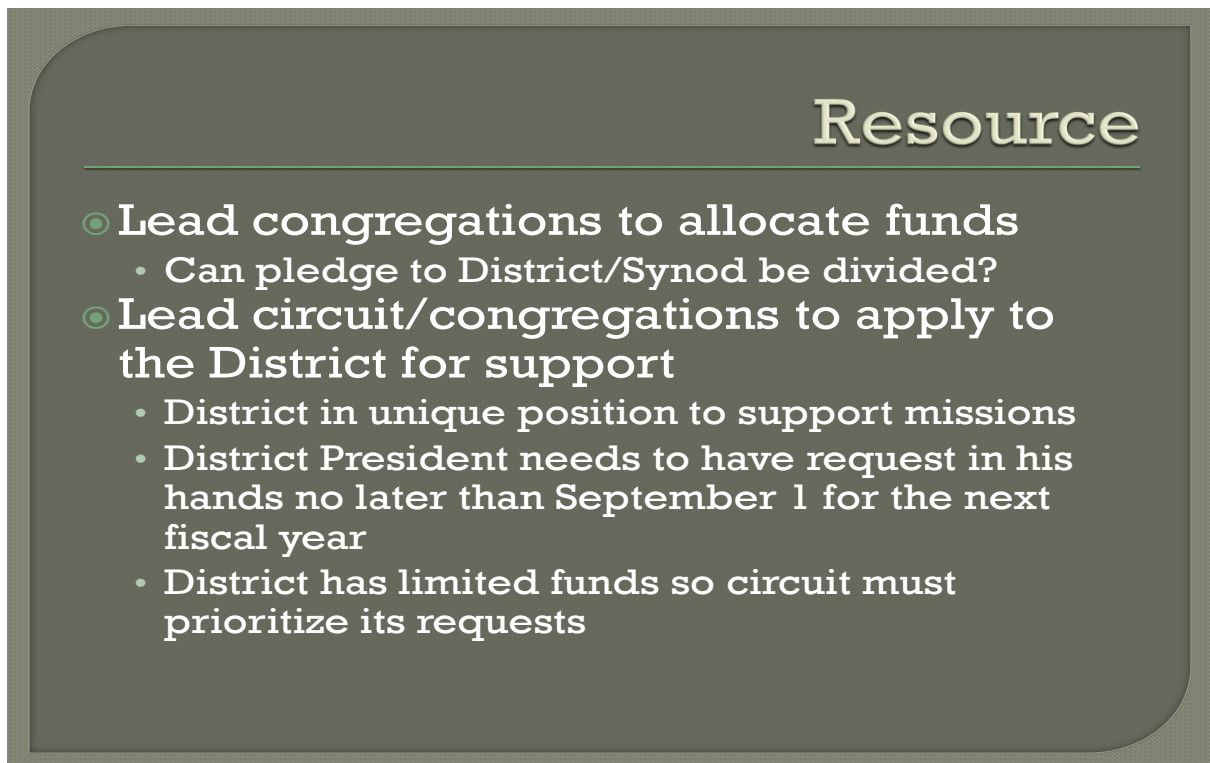
The remaining slides in this presentation took the trainees through the steps of church planting that President Golter and I had identified for our presentations to the circuit counselors and the district's Board of Directors. I presented a process for identifying a Covenant Congregation and we discussed different models for church planting. The Large Start Model had used the "mother-daughter" model, in which the Covenant Congregation supplied the personnel for the launch team, mentoring for the planter and acted as a conduit for funding. The GGP would be more flexible, allowing the circuits to partner with the Covenant Congregation to determine which model worked best for their location.

One slide led to considerable discussion. That slide was devoted to ways in which the Circuit Mission Agent would lead the circuit to identify resources for the church plant. The intention was to introduce the district into the vision of the trans-congregational church, participating and partnering with the circuit in the mission of church planting. The Circuit Mission Agent would take the lead in encouraging the congregations to allocate funds in their budgets to cooperatively support the church plant. The question was asked in the slide concerning the congregation's annual pledge to the

district budget. Could that pledge be divided or re-directed to support the church plant?

Would the district allow this sharing of funds?

President Golter raised the example of the Sterling mission in which those congregations undertook their fund-raising as “above and beyond” their current level of funding. He recommended that as a model. A number of questions followed. What if the cooperating congregations did not have the resources for an “above and beyond” sort of commitment? Could the circuit congregations together control where their resources went, when designated for missions?(See Figure 6)



The slide is titled "Resource" in a large, bold, serif font. Below the title is a horizontal line. The slide contains two main bullet points, each preceded by a green circle. The first bullet point is "Lead congregations to allocate funds" and the second is "Lead circuit/congregations to apply to the District for support". Each of these has sub-bullets. The text is white on a dark gray background.

- **Lead congregations to allocate funds**
 - Can pledge to District/Synod be divided?
- **Lead circuit/congregations to apply to the District for support**
 - District in unique position to support missions
 - District President needs to have request in his hands no later than September 1 for the next fiscal year
 - District has limited funds so circuit must prioritize its requests

Figure 6

The answer given was consistent with a trans-congregational realization of *ecclesia*.

President Golter built his answer on the points under the second bullet in the slide. The District is a larger gathering of the trans-congregational *ecclesia*. The district is an

expression of the *ecclesia* that encompasses the circuits and so works to serve the entire church. While funding the mission at the circuit level was vital, funding the mission at the district level was equally vital. For the congregations of Circuit A to redirect their existing mission dollars away from the district would damage the district's ability to function as *ecclesia* to help Circuit D and Circuit C fund the mission opportunities in the corner of the church. The discussion became another opportunity to teach and to demonstrate the life of the trans-congregational church.

The presentation ended with the introduction of how the future of the Gospel Gap might look. The Circuit Mission Agents would be convened as a committee to work with the District Chief Mission Officer (a name change from the Executive for Missions) to oversee the implementation of the GGP and to make recommendations to the district's Board of Directors concerning the funding priorities of those church plants proposed by the circuits. These gatherings would also be opportunities for reflection and feedback on how well the GGP was being implemented and how flexible it was proving to be throughout the district. The presentation ended with a slide designed to promote discussion, explaining the process was in the formative stage and asking for their input. Being close to supper, the members of the group did not choose to offer any input.

The second day of the training session began with inclement weather. Since some of the participants went home, the snowy weather delayed their return to the training. President Golter's office received notice that another one of our participants (AU4) had become ill during the night and would not be joining us.¹¹⁵ Another trainee (AU3) shared that he did not feel that he could serve as a Circuit Mission Agent. His congregation's

¹¹⁵ He did email me a few weeks later to tell me he was presenting the Gospel Gap to his circuit that month and hoped that they would support the efforts of his congregation to plant a congregation.

efforts to plant a congregation in another town had so divided the circuit that it caused him considerable hurt. He didn't wish to be in a position where the division would be his to manage. I responded that I hoped the next presentation would help him manage the division within his circuit.

I titled the last presentation of the training, "Working Together as a Circuit." This presentation incorporated the thoughts and research of a LC-MS layperson, C. Wolfmueller of Oregon. His son is a member of the Denver Southeast Circuit and had provided me with his dad's material. Mr. Wolfmueller had given considerable thought to the way he saw the circuit pastors behave and interact in the various regions in which he'd lived. He was a social scientist by training, so he set his skills to analyzing the behavior he observed and making recommendations for improvement. He developed a diagram to illustrate his observations and recommendations. (See Figure 7)

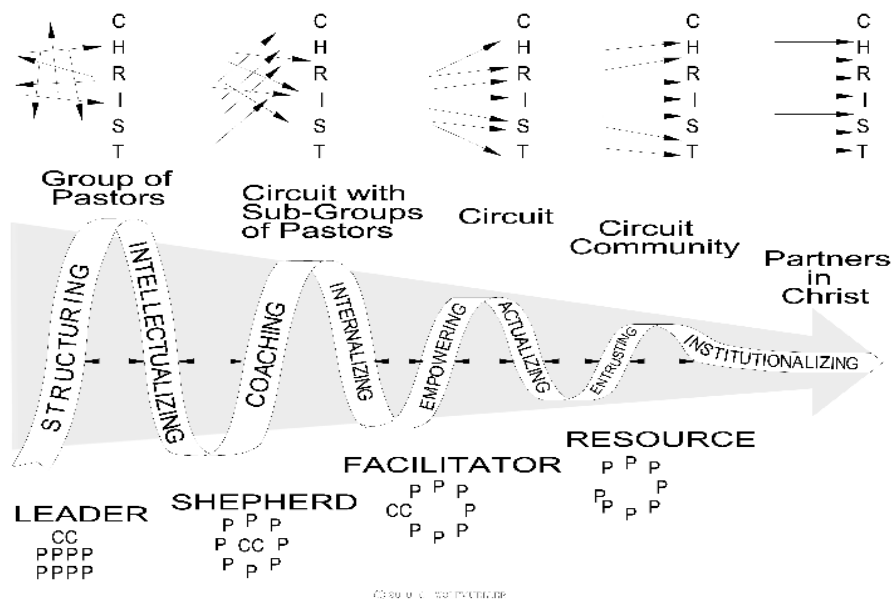


Figure 7

The top series in the diagram illustrates various circuits. The “group of pastors” have their agendas and hearts directed in many directions and are not, in Mr. Wolfmueller’s opinion, following Christ’s desire for His church. The “circuit with sub-groups of pastors” is divided. The pastors are aligned with Christ, but they have let their own agendas divide themselves into interest groups. The transition of the circuit pastors from simply functioning in the structure of the circuit toward acting together as partners in mission and in Christ depends on the way the circuit counselor fulfills his role.

The lower level of the diagram demonstrates the different roles the circuit counselor might fill. When he takes the “leader” role, he is more of a school teacher or principal who keeps the class together. However, the group of pastors doesn’t move toward unity because the circuit counselor is most concerned with control. As the circuit counselor moves towards serving as a “resource” and surrenders his need for control, the circuit pastors will make the transition into a community and partnership with Christ.

In Mr. Wolfmueller’s assessment, the mission Christ has given the church is the focus (demonstrated by the spiral in the center of the diagram) of the circuit when the pastors see themselves as partners and the circuit counselor sees himself as a resource within the partnership. In assembling this presentation, I hoped that this diagram would serve to demonstrate how *ecclesia* might be realized at the circuit level. Mr. Wolfmueller provided several scales to be used by the circuit counselor—or in our case, the Circuit Mission Agent—to assess at which his circuit functioned.

The trainees felt that this presentation was too involved for them to use. They understood the point of the training—that sharing in the mission of Christ unites congregations and pastors. However, some felt offended that the diagram suggested that

a pastor's heart was not aligned with Christ if he disagreed with his fellow pastors in the circuit. Others felt some of Mr. Wolfmuehler's descriptors within the assessment scale were weighted toward partnership in the Synod as a structure rather than in the mission of Synod as *ecclesia*. Looking at the slide entitled, "How Does Your Circuit Learn Together?" the participants felt that the goal of pastors as partners is Christ "to relate learning to long-term Synod member unity" focused attention on the Synod as an institution rather than as *ecclesia*. (See Figure 8)

How Does the Circuit Learn Together?

	1 Group of Pastors	2 Circuit with Sub-Groups of Pastors	3 Circuit	4 Circuit Community	5 Partners in Christ
LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not recognize learning as part of the circuit meeting "I come, I meet, I go home." Sees circuit meeting as an impediment to getting minister work done/Too busy to learn at circuit meetings Believes learning is the responsibility of the individual pastor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need help identifying areas for circuit learning Some circuit members understand need for circuit learning No Commitment to circuit learning Does not recognize difference between individual pastor learning and circuit learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to learn together Will schedule time for circuit learning All circuit members understand need for circuit learning Circuit recognizes benefits of circuit learning Circuit identifies gaps between where they are and where they need to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circuit takes responsibility for their own learning Understands circuit learning is a tool for unity and enjoys the challenge Contributes to improvement of circuit learning Recognizes circuit learning will get them out of "fighting" mode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively seeks learning opportunities in and out of circuit Relates learning to long-term Synod member unity Shares responsibility for teaching others commensurate with their own learning Turns every experience into an opportunity for teaching

Figure 8

As a result of this input, I decided not to include this presentation in future training sessions.

Following this presentation, President Golter assumed the leadership of the training and we entered into the roundtable discussion. Many positive comments about the GGP were made. Some of the participants seemed to embrace the notion that the

circuit and the district were indeed *ecclesia* and not just structures between the local congregation and the “one, holy, catholic” Church. Concerns were shared that the GGP not just become “one more program” that would fade from sight when the next District President was elected or a new Executive for Missions appointed. Comments were also made encouraging us to offer other sessions so that more Circuit Mission Agents might be recruited and trained so that all seventeen circuits be represented. This last comment encouraged us to think the participants wanted these other included so that the whole *ecclesia* would participate.

The Albuquerque Training

The Aurora training session engaged five pastors¹¹⁶. President Golter and I had hoped for a better response from the seventeen circuits in the district. We chose Albuquerque, New Mexico as the location for its proximity to the several men who had agreed to attend the Aurora training but were prevented for various reasons. Immanuel Lutheran Church and School graciously agreed to host the training on May 24, 2011. Five trainees were recruited, representing six circuits—the Albuquerque circuits meet together and so nominated one man to represent them both. From a district perspective, both trainings together engaged more than half of the circuits.

The decision to shorten the training to one day was made for logistical reasons. We did not want the trainees to incur lodging expenses. Following the feedback received from the Aurora participants, I omitted the training, “Working Together as a Circuit.” The Roundtable discussion led by President Golter was less formal, taking place over lunch. The Albuquerque training also lacked the presence of the representative from The

¹¹⁶ Because of the research parameter that a participant needed to fill out both questionnaires, only four of the Aurora participants were considered for this project.

Lutheran Church Extension Fund—a handout was shared with the participants that shared the same information. What had been an eight-hour presentation divided over two days, became a seven-hour presentation in one day.

The training began with President Golter introducing the Gospel Gap Paradigm. He had sent the same article the Aurora trainees had received previous to our meeting. He spoke of the urgency of the mission in those areas of the District which were not currently being served with the Gospel. He talked of the different expressions of *ecclesia* and connected these to the trans-congregational church of Dr. Kloha’s *Concordia Journal* article already cited.

AL1¹¹⁷ shared what was happening in his circuit in response to President Golter’s comments about the urgency of the mission to cover the “gaps.” AL2 shared some skepticism with regard to the trans-congregational church encompassing circuits and districts—understanding them more structurally. AL4 welcomed the GGP as a good step towards developing more mission starts in the district. This provided a good segue into the first presentation, “Local Congregations and Circuits in the GGP.”

The presentation followed the Aurora presentation exactly. I did emphasize that I’d borrowed the terms I used in the last slide connecting parish to the “one, holy, catholic” Church from Kurt Marquardt—knowing that he would be a familiar theologian to many of those present. As with the training session in Aurora, discussion was triggered with the slide concerning the Covenant Congregation and the question of funding. AL3 wondered if the district would still be a source of funding, or did the burden fall on the Covenant Congregation and the circuit congregations alone. AL1

¹¹⁷ See Appendices Nine and Ten. Albuquerque participants are identified as AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4 and AL5.

shared how several congregations in his circuit had partnered in the past to launch a mission start, sharing their pastors as well as financial resources. President Golter commented that the district would continue to be a source of funding for missions and asked those present to not consider dividing their contributions to district to fund more local missions. We concluded the presentation and recessed the training for lunch.

When the training reconvened, I continued with the presentation, “How Do I Serve as a CMA?” AL4 had the most questions during this presentation, wanting to master the steps so that his circuit could move forward properly with their project. He was very interested in the deadlines for submission of the project for approval to the district’s Board of Directors. Others (AL3 and AL5) began to brainstorm possibilities within their own circuits—considering how they might partner with the Lutheran Hispanic Ministry Institute.¹¹⁸ AL1 spoke in more detail about what several churches in his circuit were doing to investigate mission opportunities in one of the larger communities. Several participants expressed concerns that the distance between congregations in circuits would limit their willingness to support work that was located in a remote (to them) location. As the presentation concluded, all the participants expressed an appreciation for the Gospel Gap Paradigm as a way to encourage missions. I left feeling that we had at least trained Circuit Mission Agents.

Research Tools and Methodology

This project was conceived to measure whether the training in the Gospel Gap Paradigm changed attitudes about *ecclesia*. To measure these changes a questionnaire was devised by me. This would be qualitative research in nature. The data was collected

¹¹⁸ This is a training institution based in Las Cruces, New Mexico that is now funded by the Rocky Mountain District and other sources to train workers—both lay and clergy—for work among Hispanics.

by observing the participants—hence the questions on the questionnaire are open-ended. I will be looking to see what changes may develop in the way they talk about *ecclesia* and their circuits.

Two identical questionnaires were given to the participants. The first was given at the beginning of the training session. The second was given to the participants immediately following the close of the roundtable discussion.¹¹⁹ Participants were asked to return this questionnaire within seven days of the training.

The questionnaire was designed to ask about attitudes and understandings about the *ecclesia* in mission. Since I wanted to measure if there was a change in understanding about the trans-congregational expressions of *ecclesia*, questions were designed to discern the participant’s attitudes about the local congregation, the circuit, the district, and the Synod. (See Figure 9)

Questionnaire for the Circuit Mission Agent Training

What do you understand the Gospel Gap Paradigm (GGP) to be?

What is the role of the following entities regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

The circuit:

The district:

The Synod:

and How effective are the following entities in accomplishing their roles regarding mission planting reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

The circuit:

The district:

The Synod:

¹¹⁹ In the Albuquerque session, these questionnaires were distributed following the “How Do I Serve as a CMA?” presentation.

How well do the congregations of your circuit *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

How well do the circuits of the Rocky Mountain District *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

Do you believe that your *local congregation* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

Do you believe that your *circuit* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

Do you believe that the *Rocky Mountain Districts* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

Do you believe that *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

Figure 9

While the parameter was established that a participant’s first questionnaire would not be considered without the second for the sake of good methodology, those lacking a twin will still be read for content.

The second part of the measure would be a careful listening to the roundtable discussion. Comparing the notes taken during the presentation with the notes taken during the roundtable discussion at the end of the training would discern if attitudes of the individuals had changed. This discussion was led by President Golter. He asked three basic questions to facilitate discussion: What do you think about the GGP? How do you think about the Church? What do we need to do to improve? While the last question was more of a request for input with regard to the presentation, the group’s

answers went beyond the presentation to talk about missions in the district. These answers will be discussed in the next chapter.

Summary

The training for the Circuit Mission Agents to implement the Gospel Gap Paradigm in their individual circuits was designed. The training was designed to accomplish three objectives. We wanted to communicate the basic structure of the Gospel Gap Paradigm and how the Circuit Mission Agents would operate within that structure. We wanted to change attitudes about *ecclesia*. We wanted to address the possible disharmony among the congregations in the circuits and equip our Circuit Mission Agents to address that disharmony. The answers on the questionnaires would demonstrate how well those goals were met by the training. The next chapter will analyze the answers of these nine participants to the questionnaires and to President Golter's questions in the roundtable discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The major purpose of this MAP is to assess the change in understanding of and attitude toward the trans-congregational nature of *ecclesia* of those participating in the training process for a cooperative effort toward planting churches among the circuits of the RMD. The hypothesis underlying this investigation is that mission—in this case, the planting of congregations in areas about which regionally adjacent congregations care—will serve as a tool to facilitate that change in attitude. The Gospel Gap Paradigm was devised in the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a pattern for circuits to assume the role in church planting. For the purposes of this project, the GGP is the mission. Did the mission catalyze a change in attitude among the participants in the GGP training?

Findings of the study

Two training sessions were scheduled. Initially, a training session was scheduled only for February 16-17, 2011 at the Aurora, Colorado Rocky Mountain District office. President Golter and I had hoped for a response of ten or twelve participants from the seventeen circuits. However, we recruited only five trainees.

President Golter and I decided to go ahead with the training as scheduled, but added a second training session to be held at Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Albuquerque, New Mexico on May 25, 2011. We received commitments from five trainees to attend the Albuquerque session. We felt that ten was an adequate number of Circuit Mission Agents with which to launch the Gospel Gap Paradigm.

The study ultimately engaged only nine participants who completed both questionnaires. This number of responses would hobble any quantitative research project. However, qualitative research observes and evaluates the changes in behavior of individuals. Secondly, attitudes are changed one mind at a time. Were there changes in attitude on the part of the participants in the training? The questionnaire is the most informative tool to measure changes in attitude. We will consider the two trainings consecutively.

The Aurora Training

The questionnaires of the Aurora participants illustrate a diversity of opinions between the several pastors, but do not reflect a change in attitude regarding *ecclesia*. The participant (AU3) who did not complete the training because of ill health but who did complete both of the questionnaires is already engaged in understanding *ecclesia* trans-congregationally. His answers reference Dr. Kloha's article in the July 2008 Concordia Journal. He writes in response to the question that asked if the participant believed that his circuit was "*ecclesia*": "Yes, this is what Dr. Kloha from the St. Louis seminary describes as the trans-congregational church." This participant initially observes that his circuit does not act effectively as *ecclesia*. He writes in answer to the question that asked how well the circuit cooperated in joint activities: "In general my circuit works together well, but we have yet to do a joint mission plant." His answers demonstrate the hypothesis that mission serves to unite *ecclesia*.

Another participant (AU4) decided on the second day of the training that he did not wish to serve as the Circuit Mission Agent. His answers provide some insight into his decision to withdraw. When asked whether his local congregation is the "Church," he

responded, “It’s a part of the ‘church’ but it is a part of the greater church on earth, called and equipped by God to participate in the restoration of Creation.” He drew a diagram that shows his local church—and other Christian churches—most directly connected to God within a large circle he names, “Church.” He groups “circuit,” “district” and “Synod” in a circle named “polity” with that larger “Church” circle.

AU4 gave his perception that the congregations in his circuit were in conflict with one another as his reason for choosing not to serve as the Circuit Mission Agent. He perceived that several of the congregations were in conflict with him and his congregation over the planting of a church in what they understood as their parish area. He seems to despair that, while the “Church’s” mission is to restore Creation, “polity” does not seem to serve mission. He answered the question about how well the congregations in his circuit work together in mission: “Not very well. There seem to be too many differences to overcome.” His comments might serve the hypothesis in demonstrating that where the understanding of the trans-congregational church is not present, mission does not unify *ecclesia*.

The answers of participants AU1 and AU2 on the remaining questionnaires are problematic concerning the project and the underlying hypothesis. Together with the answers of AU3 and AU4, they reflect no change in attitude with regard to their understanding of *ecclesia* after the training. The attitudes and understandings with which they began the training remained unchanged at the end of the training. The training accomplished the first objective of training Circuit Mission Agents. However, the other two objectives remain unaccomplished.

One participant (AU2) began the training with the understanding that *ecclesia* is expressed at all levels of the structural church. He answered the question whether his local congregation is “*ecclesia*”: Yes, it is God’s people gathered around Word and Sacrament. On his second questionnaire, he answered the same question in a similar manner: “Definitely, the marks of the church.” He qualified his “Yes” at the circuit level in both questionnaires. On the first, he wrote: “Yes, but our LC-MS polity doesn’t [understand circuits as *ecclesia*] because they can’t ‘call’ a missionary.” On the second questionnaire he writes, “Definitely, the communion of saints—all believers, and especially believers of the same confession as we are.” There is a similarity in his answers regarding whether district and synod are also expressions of *ecclesia*, although they are not *ecclesia* by virtue of polity or structure but because they are believers gathered around Word and Sacrament (the marks of the church).

The other participant (AU1) answered the first questionnaire in a manner opposite from his fellow trainee. When asked whether his local congregation is “*ecclesia*,” he responded, “Yes. There is Word and sacrament.” On the second questionnaire, his answer is nearly identical: “Yes. It is doing Word and sacrament in our area.” When asked if he believed that *ecclesia* was expressed at the circuit, district or synodical levels, he responded uniformly: “No. This is at the local congregation.” His second questionnaire was equally adamant to the three questions: “No. Word and sacrament are not done at this level.” The training did not challenge him to rethink his definitions at all.

The roundtable discussion

The roundtable discussion followed the presentation, “Working Together as a Circuit.” President Golter led the discussion with AU1, AU2 and AU4 in attendance as

well as me. President Golter had developed three basic questions designed to stimulate discussion. His three questions were: “What do you think about the GGP?” “How do you think about the Church?” “What do we need to improve?” The general themes in the conversation serve to support the conclusions of the analysis of the questionnaires.

“What do you think about the GGP?”

Discussion revealed a generally favorable reception of the Gospel Gap Paradigm as a model for church planting in the district. Most speakers responded with comments that moving the decisions for church planting to the local rather than the district level was a good choice. One participant (AU2) said that in talking with a retired pastor about the GGP, that pastor thought that “this [the GGP’s focus on circuits] was how they used to do it.” This respondent went on to say that he agreed with the GGP and hoped to see that new church plants would not be initiated until the circuit agreed. President Golter cautioned that a unanimous vote should not be expected before initiating a church plant. The fellow resisted the meaning of that caution and pressed that without agreement of every congregation the circuit could not move forward. President Golter and several other participants disagreed. The fellow then changed the subject to address past district mission patterns.

He said that he hoped the Gospel Gap Paradigm wouldn’t just be a passing whim. He spoke disdainfully of the Large Start Model and wondered about the wisdom of district mission projects from years before. President Golter and I assured him that this was a long term plan. He responded that he hoped it would outlive my doctoral work. Other participants then took hold of the conversation to talk about how more communication within the district would help. They wanted to be kept informed about

what other circuits were doing. These comments inspired by the first question demonstrated that the first objective of familiarizing the participants with the Gospel Gap Paradigm and training them to be Circuit Mission Agents had been accomplished.

“How do you think about the Church?”

AU2 took this question structurally and spoke about the district’s responsibilities in “policing” the pastors and congregations so that they were consistent with the speakers’ definitions of confessional and faithful. Another participant (AU1), also speaking to the question of “Church” structurally, shared that he felt the district should be more supportive to pastors who are struggling and anticipate problems and offer solutions before the problems develop. Another participant (AU4) said he felt the Church should be about sharing the Gospel. He felt that whatever the district did should be to promote missions to the lost. The responses were all from a structural/political perspective of the Church, rather than from a theological perspective of *ecclesia*. While the fact that the question was posed by the district president may have prejudiced the responses toward a polity-directed perspective, President Golter had spent the two days speaking theologically about *ecclesia*. The comments demonstrate that the training did not change attitudes.

“What can we improve?”

This question sought ways to improve the presentation. Some of the respondents understood that and suggested that the presentation, “Working Together as a Circuit,” be dropped or significantly revised. They felt that the circuit counselor, not the Circuit Mission Agent, needed to assume the role of leading the circuit pastors toward unity. AU2 took the opportunity to say that unity should be in doctrine and practice. He felt the

circuit counselors weren't doing enough to assure a consistency in the practices of pastors and congregations within his circuit. Another (AU3) commented that the circuit counselor could build unity by encouraging congregations to come around a mission, like a church plant. President Golter sought to return the conversation to an improvement in the GGP training.

The conversation did focus on that understanding of his question. The participants regarded the training well. I was thanked for assembling it all and bringing them together. One commented that the DVR on Covenant Congregations might be irrelevant to future presentations since the Synod had discontinued the program. I agreed, saying that we could cover the purpose of the Covenant Congregation in the Gospel Gap Paradigm without visiting the former program of the Synod. Final comments from the participants asking that I keep them informed of how the GGP was progressing throughout the district closed the roundtable. We adjourned with a short devotion by President Golter.

The Albuquerque Training

The responses of the Aurora participants suggest that the training accomplished the goal of training Circuit Mission Agents but did not effect a change in how each participant theologically understood *ecclesia*. The Albuquerque sample is similar to the Aurora sample. Aside from the layperson that makes the group five, the Albuquerque group consists of four pastors—just as the Aurora group. Did the answers confirm the results of the Aurora analysis or challenge them?

Like the Aurora participants, each of the Albuquerque participants answered the questions about the effectiveness of their congregations and circuits in meeting the

challenges of mission and outreach out of their experience. Most are disappointed by the lack of effectiveness on the part of the local congregations. The disappointment seems to arise from a comparison of potential with the actual. AL1 described the role of the local congregation to “determine the needs of the community, [the] strategy [to meet those needs], and [measure the] progress.” AL3 agreed, describing the local congregation as having “boots on the ground, seeing the need of their neighbor.” Yet, when asked to comment on how effective their congregation was in filling that role, AL1 wrote that the “local congregation often looks inward, and while paying close attention to matters on the “home front” fail[s] to see the mission across the street.” AL3 cryptically described his congregation as “on the verge” of effectiveness in filling its role. The other participants’ answers echo these sentiments. Unlike those participating in the Aurora training, the Albuquerque participants noted the impact of the distance between their congregations as a factor in their ability and effectiveness in working together.¹²⁰

A comparison of the responses from the participants at the beginning of the training and at the end of the training on the definition of *ecclesia* shows little or no change as a result of the training. With the exception of AL2, who seems to move from a negative to at least a neutral opinion on the status of circuits and district as *ecclesia*, whatever the participant believed about *ecclesia* did not change because of the training. It is interesting how some of the participants’ definitions of *ecclesia* vary from one another and from the usual confessional Lutheran definition of the church as the location where the Word is preached and the Gospels administered in their truth and purity.

¹²⁰ It is interesting to note that in the Aurora training, all of the participants drove fewer than seventy miles to attend. In the Albuquerque training, only one participant drove less than seventy miles to attend. He lives in Albuquerque.

AL1 echoes a sentiment that *ecclesia* and mission overlap—“the local congregation acts on Christ’s commission...”—and the focus is on the local congregation as an expression of the larger Church. AL3 seems to agree with this understanding of the local congregation—that the local congregation is *ecclesia* for “the local area but part of the larger Church as we support one another...” AL5 describes the local congregation as the place that hears Christ’s invitation to gather: “where two or three are gathered in His name there is “Church.” Word and sacrament as marks of the church do not find mention until AL5 defines the district and Synod as *ecclesia*. It would seem that the “two or three” can be understood as gathering in Christ’s name around Word and sacrament. So, while there is a variety of definitions of *ecclesia* offered by the participants, these definitions are not affected by the training.

The questionnaires demonstrate that, as in Aurora, the training did not impact a change in attitudes about *ecclesia* among the participants. What conceptions they had at the beginning of the training were not affected. What ramifications do these realities have on the project? Can any success be counted?

The roundtable discussion

The schedule of the Albuquerque Training allowed the roundtable discussion to be held over the lunch break. In addition to President Golter and me, AL1 and his wife, AL2, AL3, AL4 and AL5 were present for the discussion. AL1’s wife did not participate in the roundtable discussion. Lunch was enjoyed at a nearby restaurant, so the roundtable discussion was less formal than it had been for the Aurora training. President Golter did ask the same three basic questions. However, the background noise of the restaurant prevented as engaged a conversation as the Aurora training had enjoyed. AL4 was very

excited about the Gospel Gap Paradigm as he saw this model as very accommodating for a project this circuit was developing. His project had begun as a circuit-wide discussion and he saw the GGP as a way to facilitate that discussion from words into deeds.

AL5 and AL 3 shared opinions that they'd been involved in circuit-based mission projects in other places and welcomed the GGP. AL2 wondered what the impact the distance between the circuit congregations would have on the GGP's success. Several agreed that communication between the congregations, circuits and district through the Circuit Mission Agent would be crucial for the success of the GGP. Concerns that enough CMAs be recruited and trained were also heard from AL1 and AL3. These were concerns that had been also raised at the Aurora training. I wondered how the responses on the Albuquerque questionnaires would compare to those of the Aurora participants.

Data Analysis

The responses of the nine participants indicate that the project was successful in only one of the three objectives. The participants were trained in how to serve as Circuit Mission Agents. Attitudes about *ecclesia* and mission were unchanged. The hope that circuit congregations joining in a mission would realize the trans-congregational *ecclesia* remains yet to fulfilled. Going into this project, certain expectations were identified. How did the project meet those expectations?

Expectations

There were two kinds of outcomes expected from this project developed to change the attitudes about *ecclesia* in the minds of pastors and laity, negative and positive.

Negative

1. The Gospel Gap Paradigm might shatter on the rocks of the systemic dysfunction of the structural church.

Evidence for the dysfunction of the structural church was encountered in the comments made on the questionnaires and in the roundtable discussion (in Aurora). The perception among the participants in the training is that some of the members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod don't work well together. This perception did not lead the participants to think that the Gospel Gap Paradigm would not be an appropriate model. For most of the respondents, the perception was that the dysfunction was in *other* circuits, not their own.

The training was well-received. Already circuits are starting to follow the lead of their Circuit Mission Agents to identify, prioritize, strategize and develop resources to fill the “Gospel Gaps” in their regions. The GGP is only a year old. As with most one year olds, it is difficult to see what it will grow up to be. However, at this point, it appears that this negative expectation that the GGP might be ruined by the lack of cooperation and disharmony among some of the members of the LC-MS will not be realized.

2. The training will fail to change attitudes.

Evidence from the questionnaires and the roundtable discussion indicate that this negative expectation was realized. The data show that whatever understanding the participant held when the training began remained unchanged following the training. This realization does not invalidate the trans-congregational understanding of *ecclesia*. It only demonstrates that attitudes are rarely changed by a two-day training session. Of course, these conclusions are based on a limited data set of nine participants. A larger group of trainees may show a different outcome.

Positive

1. The GGP will prove a successful agency and the training will energize the circuits into Christ's mission.

The data gained from the responses to the questionnaires and the comments made during the roundtable discussion indicate an acceptance of the Gospel Gap Paradigm as the agency or pattern for church planting in the Rocky Mountain District. The GGP continues to have the backing of the Board of Directors of the district and the district president. The GGP is a successful agency for energizing circuits into Christ's mission.

Other observations support this conclusion. The agreement and contribution of funds of the congregations in the Sterling, Colorado, region came as the Gospel Gap Paradigm was being developed. The Circuit Mission Agent who attended the training agreed that his circuit's actions fit the pattern of the GGP intentionally. The Circuit Mission Agent who became ill at the Aurora training has brought the GGP to his circuit's attention and sought to gather support for a church plant in his circuit. The Sandia Circuits—recipients of the second GGP training—developed the strategy for planting Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, as a direct result of the GGP. The Circuit Mission Agent worked closely with the steering committee of that project. The GGP shows potential to be a successful agency for energizing circuits into Christ's mission.

2. The GGP will prove itself a valuable means for pastor and laypeople to work together and their life together as *ecclesia* will be enhanced.

The data may or may not be used to support this conclusion. The trainees did enjoy the opportunity to talk about how the GGP would work and the need for the

laypeople to be involved. Only one trainee—in the Albuquerque training—was a layperson. The experience of this layperson with the GGP was positive. In telephone conversations, he shared how he was working with the pastors of the steering committee to develop the project in Albuquerque. Anecdotally, his experience would validate this expectation. However, the project really was not developed to measure this expectation. The GGP is a relatively new effort in the Rocky Mountain District. Further research is needed to prove this expectation.

3. More mission starts within the boundaries of the RMD will be initiated in geographic areas not currently served and new people groups will be identified and the Gospel will be preached to new ears and the lost will be saved.

This expectation is grandiose in its scope. As a result, measurement would prove difficult. The questionnaire and the roundtable discussion did not provide data to measure whether this expectation would be met. Certainly, all those participating intend that this expectation would be met. They even pray toward that goal. However, is the GGP resulting in new congregations?

Under the Large Start Model, three church planting ventures were undertaken in the Rocky Mountain District. Two of them continue as local congregations. Between 2008 and 2010, those church plants that were made in the Rocky Mountain District were initiated by congregations. One congregation, sending five of its members to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to participate in the newly-designed Specific Ministry Program to be trained and ordained as pastors, planted or re-planted five congregations. Another congregation received an Ethiopian student enrolled in the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology through Concordia Seminary to serve his vicarage developing an Ethiopian

Lutheran congregation. The district's focus in those years was on continuing to find funding for the Large Start congregations.

Since the advent of the GGP, one church plant has been successfully funded and is well-planned. Another church plant has an excited steering committee working to refine their presentation to the district Board of Directors. Reports from the other Circuit Mission Agents describe circuits coming together to either support existing missions in their midst or to discuss how they might plant a church together. Through the Gospel Gap Paradigm, there is a growing partnership between congregations, circuits, and the district to plant new churches and support struggling congregations. These events would suggest the expected positive result is possible.

Summary

This training was developed with three objectives in mind. Only one of these objectives—the training of Circuit Mission Agents—was successfully accomplished. The project built around this training was designed to measure the change in attitudes about *ecclesia* and mission brought about through the training. The measurement of the limited data set indicates that attitudes were not changed through the training. The training did not accomplish the objective of changing attitudes and understandings of *ecclesia*. The project might continue into the future as the training is offered again in different areas. A larger population to observe may show different results.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This effort began as a personal quest to understand how mission and *ecclesia* related to one another. When this personal quest was met with the opportunity to answer this same question for the congregations of the Rocky Mountain District, the Major Applied Project to train agents to connect *ecclesia* with mission in their circuits through the Gospel Gap Paradigm was developed. As I became convinced that Dr. Kloha's description of the trans-congregational *ecclesia* was Scriptural and missional, the project received that additional purpose of teaching the trans-congregational *ecclesia*. This project was designed to train participants to use the Gospel Gap Paradigm in planting churches at the circuit level, use the mission of planting churches to unite the congregations of the circuits as *ecclesia*, and, to change attitudes toward and understandings *ecclesia* as trans-congregational.

This project appears to have failed to meet one of the three of its objectives. While disappointing, these results do not mean that the project cannot make meaningful contributions to ministry. Certainly there already is a contribution to the ministry of the Rocky Mountain District. The Rocky Mountain District is a part of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. If one part of a whole benefits, how is the whole affected? Finally, participating in the project has brought benefit to me. I did gain personal satisfaction from study and reflection on *ecclesia* and how it is engaged in mission.

Contributions to Ministry

There are three levels at which I can speak of ways in which this project has contributed to ministry.

First, research for the project enriched my theological knowledge and so my preaching as I serve my local congregation. I have begun to lead Mount Olive in thinking of itself not simply as an autonomous “franchise” carrying the logo of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. When Mount Olive served as the Covenant Congregation for Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, the costs incurred through the Large Start Model could have left Mount Olive reeling into self-concern. Funds were expended and members transferred away from Mount Olive. Mount Olive felt the pain of loss.

The research into the richness of *ecclesia* gave me the resources to redirect Mount Olive’s pain more positively. Mount Olive remembered that we were part of the larger expression of *ecclesia* so that we didn’t lose funds and members to Cross of Christ; we contributed to the mission of *ecclesia* in Aurora. As a result, when I asked Mount Olive’s Endowment Committee to give Cross of Christ \$7000 in 2011 to help meet operating expenses, the vote to do so was unanimous. Mount Olive benefited from this project.

At the district level, the contributions of this project are apparent. This project supported the development of the Gospel Gap Paradigm as the pattern for church planting in the district. This project also provided the district with the training for the Circuit Mission Agents so the Gospel Gap Paradigm can be implemented on the circuit level. The training’s success in training Circuit Mission Agents has benefited the district as new church plants are being developed and designed in the district’s circuits. The Rocky Mountain District benefitted from this project.

The contributions this project might make to the larger church have yet to be realized. This project assumes and the research develops a church planting model that is consistent with Lutheran ecclesiology. If indeed previous models in use across the Synod

are flawed in the area of ecclesiology, this project can provide a valuable alternative. If previous models were flawed because they had a negative impact on the Synod structurally—covenanting congregations directly with the Synod, skipping over circuits and districts—this project provides a model that can revitalize the structure—embracing *ecclesia* at the local, circuit, district, and synod levels in the mission of planting churches. This project could bring benefit to the larger church, namely, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth

I spoke earlier of the contributions this project made to Mount Olive as I serve as one of its pastors. Mount Olive better engaged in the life of *ecclesia* in the larger expressions. I am also better engaged in the life of *ecclesia* in the larger expressions of district and synod. In my personal and professional development, I chose not to become involved until this project. I had served as a circuit counselor previous to this project, but that was more as a favor to the district president in friendship than out of commitment to the larger church. Once engaged by this project and having my understanding of *ecclesia* stretched, I found myself involved more in the polity of the district and synod.

In 2009, I was asked to serve as the floor committee chairman for what was called the Theological Unity Committee. This floor committee was gathered by the district president to receive all of the resolutions that came to the Rocky Mountain District convention after the Synod released all the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synod's Structure and Governance. At the core of these recommendations and resulting resolutions was the understanding of *ecclesia*. Because of my research, the

district president invited me into this task. Because of my changed understanding of *ecclesia*, I accepted.

In 2010, the Executive for Missions of the Rocky Mountain District left this position for a different position out of state. This had two effects that demonstrate the contributions of this project. First, I agreed to donate my time as a volunteer Assistant to the President for Missions. Second, Mount Olive agreed with this proposal to share their pastor with the district. These decisions would not have been made had I not been engaged in this project. This project allowed me to grow professionally.

Participation in this project resulted in personal growth as well. I had been engaged in a personal quest to connect mission and *ecclesia*. This quest was not one to simply connect them structurally or institutionally. I wanted to understand how much they overlapped. Long ago, as a Master of Divinity student, I had heard one of my professors, Dr. Norman Nagel, teach that one “has it right” when the theological nouns overlapped in Christ. He meant that when forgiveness and salvation and sanctification and love overlapped with Gospel and cross and Christ, your theology was “in Christ.” I was seeking the same overlap for “*ecclesia*” and “mission.” Researching this project brought me to this personal theological overlap. My personal quest has reached a resting place before I pick up another theological noun with which to wrestle.

Another personal quest in which this project brought growth is the desire to be more disciplined. This project with the structure provided by the Doctor of Ministry department has led me to become more disciplined. The requirement for chapters and the guidelines for writing led me to appreciate structure as a way to style of expression.

Initially, I resisted those guidelines, but completing this project has brought the satisfaction that comes from discipline.

Finally, completing this project brings me the personal satisfaction of completing a project. When I finish painting a room, I enjoy the satisfaction of completion. When a worship service goes really well and the themes of the service match the themes of Scripture, I enjoy the satisfaction of completion. As I write the last words of this project and reflect on how the themes of my personal theological quest have come together with the themes of this project, I enjoy the satisfaction of completion. The realization that the project itself did not fully accomplish the objectives of the training does not diminish this satisfaction. I am better for having begun this journey and thank God for the opportunity to have walked this path.

Recommendations

I state above that I enjoy the satisfaction of completion. In a sense, though, the project continues. The research continues to inform my ministry and reflection on the mission that *ecclesia* has yet to do in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Rocky Mountain District, the Denver Southeast Circuit, and my congregation, Mount Olive Lutheran Church. This project and its findings lead me offer the following recommendations.

1. Mount Olive has identified a ministry target to plant a mission congregation after 2013. Mount Olive should implement that target sooner rather than later.

Mount Olive entered into a debt-reduction capital campaign in July of 2010. The stated goal of that campaign was to make more money available for ministry—rather than

continue to pay off the mortgage. In July of 2011, the Governing Board identified several targets, or desired outcomes, from this capital campaign. One of these targets is to plant a church. Mount Olive has been challenged by its long-term mission plan to plant up to four churches. One of these plants was the above-mentioned Cross of Christ.

With the Gospel Gap Paradigm as the pattern for church planting in the district, Mount Olive can have more flexibility in serving as the Covenant Congregation than it had under the Large Start Model. However, since the Gospel Gap Paradigm doesn't offer a model for shaping the actual plant, Mount Olive needs to have a plan. Mount Olive should adopt a strategy for 2012 to develop that plan for assigning resources and aligning programs to support the new church plant. Mount Olive should also work closely with the other congregations in the Denver Southeast circuit to identify which Gospel Gaps have the highest priority. There are several Mount Olive might choose for itself—an unreached Korean population that connects with Mount Olive through the Early Childhood Education Center; to partner with the neighboring congregation beginning the Ethiopian outreach, or to investigate the neighborhoods around Legend High School outside of Parker, Colorado—but the cooperation with its circuit sisters would help encourage all the congregations to understand the circuit as *ecclesia*.

Mount Olive could act as a catalyst for changing the attitudes and understandings about *ecclesia* in the circuit. Perhaps, if all the congregations acted as if we believed that the circuit together is an expression of *ecclesia* and not just an administrative structure, we would come to believe it for ourselves. The mission of the church would be furthered by such a change.

2. The Circuit Mission Agent of the Denver Southeast circuit could play a more active role in the implementation of the Gospel Gap Paradigm.

I serve as the Circuit Mission Agent for the Denver Southeast circuit¹²¹. I did make a brief presentation to the pastors of the circuit in 2010. I realized the time had come to increase our circuit's participation in the Gospel Gap Paradigm after our Circuit Forum in January of 2012. The forum was convened to prepare the pastors and congregations for the upcoming district convention in 2012 and the convention of the Synod in 2013. New rules enacted by the 2010 convention of the Synod mean new ways of nominating candidates to office and a new emphasis upon resolutions that begin at the circuit forum. Before he explained these new rules, the Circuit Counselor briefly mentioned the Gospel Gap Paradigm and asked if anyone had any suggestions for the circuit to consider as a Gospel Gap.

Several suggestions were offered. The students at the University of Denver were not the focus of an intentional outreach since the closure in 2010 of Christ Triumphant—the congregation committed to that ministry. The congregation engaged in the Ethiopian outreach invited the circuit congregations to participate. A so-called exurban neighborhood between Castle Rock and Elizabeth was suggested. Clearly, members of the circuit congregations had been thinking about mission and those members need some direction. Training the circuit pastors into the details of the Gospel Gap Paradigm will lend direction to those thoughts. These ideas and the efforts of our member congregations can then be focused to help the circuit identify and prioritize the planning

¹²¹ For the reader's benefit, the Denver Southeast circuit serves an area roughly bound by Colfax Avenue to the north, Broadway Boulevard to the west in Denver, heading southeast to the boundaries of Douglas, Elbert and Arapahoe Counties. Currently, there are eleven LC-MS congregations in that large geographic area.

and strategize together and assign resources to support church planting in those and other areas. There is work to be done. The Circuit Mission Agent needs to get involved.

3. The Rocky Mountain District should issue a Divine Call to a pastor to serve full-time in area of missions.

The Gospel Gap Paradigm suggests that the pastor who is ultimately called to fill this position have the title of Chief Mission Officer. The current job description calls for an Executive for Missions. The job title is inconsequential. The job description is vital.

The bylaws of the district require the person be an ordained, LC-MS clergyman. The current job description should be updated to include the needs of the Gospel Gap Paradigm. Some suggestions were made by the February 16-17, 2010, trainees: Engage with all of circuits and their Circuit Mission Agents to ensure participation.

Communicate with the circuits to encourage them with the accomplishments and help them to learn from the missteps in other circuits. Meet with all the Circuit Mission Agents annually for continuing education and to prioritize that various church plant projects for the district's Board of Directors. Certainly, other tasks would need to be included in the job description as well—the training could be re-designed to better accomplish all three objectives. However the job description is vital—and accountability is vital—to fully implement the Gospel Gap Paradigm as a pattern for church planting in the Rocky Mountain District.

4. The Rocky Mountain District president should consider presenting the Gospel Gap Paradigm to the Council of Presidents or to the National Mission Board of the Synod as an alternative pattern for church planting.

Sharing the Gospel Gap Paradigm with the larger Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod could encourage mission in the larger *ecclesia*. The Rocky Mountain District would be acting as a part of the larger expression of the church. Again, perhaps if we act the part of *ecclesia*, we will believe that we are *ecclesia*. The districts could come to see themselves joined in a common mission with a common plan. This shared plan would organically overlap and connect the layers of *ecclesia* with one another: congregations to circuits; circuits and congregations to districts; and, congregation, circuits and districts to the Synod. All expressions gathered together around *ecclesia*'s objective of expanding mission outreach.

5. The Gospel Gap Paradigm training should be expanded to include the Circuit Mission Agents from the remaining circuits of the Rocky Mountain District.

The participants in both the Aurora and Albuquerque trainings expressed the desire that the Gospel Gap Paradigm would continue. Since this project seems to have demonstrated that the training course is effective in training Circuit Mission Agents, it should be offered to others. No representatives from Utah or the western circuits of the Rocky Mountain District attended either training. While President Golter did present the Gospel Gap Paradigm in outline form to the Circuit Counselors at their Breckinridge, Colorado, meeting on October 3, 2011, the Circuit Mission Agents were not in attendance.

A training session could be scheduled to be held in either Grand Junction, Colorado, or Salt Lake City, Utah. The Grand Junction location might be preferable to attract those CMAs from the Denver area and eastern Colorado who have yet to be trained. The format used in Albuquerque might serve the purpose best. A one-day

training would eliminate hotel costs. With all the Circuit Mission Agents trained, the Gospel Gap Paradigm would fully serve as the model for the engagement of congregations in their circuits as *ecclesia* in mission.

These are some recommendations that flow out of the research and the fulfillment of this project. The reader may have developed other recommendations for the Gospel Gap Paradigm and for the church on his or her own. This author hopes the reader has developed more or other recommendations. You will have participated in one of the goals of this project—to change attitudes and understandings and lead believers and congregations to think differently about *ecclesia*. You are continuing the project yourself as you live and think as a member of *ecclesia*.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

1 Corinthians 12:27

TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY

APPENDIX ONE

Association of Related Churches (ARC)

Church Planting Model

LC-MS Pilot



Association of Related Churches (ARC)

Church Planting Model

LC-MS Pilot

ARC Executive Committee

North American Mission Enablers

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

June 21, 2006

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Association of Related Churches

Church Planting Model

Background

The Association of Related Churches (ARC), a church planting ministry, has used a model of church planting that has demonstrated great promise. In the last five years ARC has been instrumental in 31 church plants. Twenty-eight of them are considered successful, with a total worship attendance among them of about 10,000. According to ARC, three of the churches were in the top 50 fastest growing churches in the United States.

LC-MS National Mission's Blue Ribbon Committee for New Starts, chaired by Rev. Ken Hennings, studied how other denominations and organizations were beginning missions in new and creative ways. Through their work, the LC-MS became aware of ARC. A meeting was held with the ARC Director Billy Hornsby and interested District representatives in Las Vegas, NV on April 27, 2006 to learn more about ARC and the model that has been in use.

Model Description

The model used by Hornsby contains elements that are well recognized in church planting circles. However, the model seems to deploy this knowledge in a unique way with exceptional results. A brief description of the model is:

A church planter

- is carefully selected,
- receives orientation and training at the “Church Planters Roundtable,”
- is mentored in a missional congregation,
- in anticipation of planting the mission
 - secures 3-6 months’ salary/benefits for pre-launch phase
 - raises at least \$30,000 for start-up costs and
 - recruits 35 people for his launch team,
- is placed in a “resource rich environment” that includes
 - a mentor with experience in church planting,

- sample elements related to church planting, such as budgets, timelines, and marketing pieces.

ARC

- provides training and mentoring
- will also match the amount raised by the planter with a loan up to \$30,000 to be repaid by the ministry.
- Guarantees a minimum income for the ministry that declines quarterly for one year (maximum \$75,000).

Significant Elements of the Model

Church Planter Selection

The model recognizes the importance of selecting the right church planter. To some degree, it seems that other model elements encourage a self-selection process. The model holds the planter to such a degree of accountability, and such a high expectation of success, that any potential planter that is not entrepreneurial would simply shy away from it.

The ARC model presumes high expectations of the church planter in terms of bringing about growing worship attendance and financial responsibility. If a planter is unable or unwilling to accomplish the above, it would probably indicate that he should not be a church planter.

Resource Rich Environment

The model recognizes the need to place the planter in a “resource rich environment.” A planter should not be left to learn by trial and error, but should be supplied with the necessary tools and surrounded by people who are able to offer advice, counsel and encouragement. The ARC Model includes the following resources.

Church Planting Roundtable – This is a one day conference to offer training in church planting, the model and orientation to ARC;

Mentoring/Coaching Program – The planter is matched or at least introduced to an experienced church planter, who is able to offer guidance, counsel and encouragement to the planter;

Specific Church Planting Information – This includes resources such as timeline and budget and their related tasks.

Financial Plan

The ARC Model holds the ministry accountable to become self-supporting in a very short time, usually in less than one year, with a relatively small amount of money from the outside.

Pre-launch

The church planter is to secure his pre-launch salary and benefits for three to six months. This can be through a sponsoring church as well as fund raising. In addition, the planter raises \$30,000 upfront for the ministry. This money can come from the planter, his family and friends, and partnering churches. Realistically, \$45,000 may be the amount needed in many contexts. The ARC model would match the funds raised up to \$30,000, giving the planter \$60,000 to \$75,000 to plant the mission. The match is paid six weeks in advance of the launch. It is to be guaranteed by a sponsoring church. A significant amount of the initial funds would be expected to be used upfront for marketing and equipment in order to have a well-attended and highly polished first worship experience. See Appendix II for a pre-launch budget.

Post-launch

The model defines general guidelines for a post-launch budget as follows.

35% Salary

35% Building (Rent, utilities, etc.)

10% Outreach

10% Youth

10% World Mission

8% Mission support of the ministry's choice

2% ARC Membership

The model guarantees an income for the ministry that declines quarterly for the first year. If the ministry's offerings fall short of the set amount, ARC will add the balance to bring it to the level set for that quarter. The ARC experience has been that most ministries are exceeding \$5000 per month by six months.

First Quarter - \$10,000 per month

Second Quarter - \$7500 per month

Third Quarter - \$5000 per month

Fourth Quarter - \$2500 per month

The money matched by ARC is a loan that is to be repaid. When the ministry meets its target budget for the current quarter, it begins repayment of the loan using the "World Mission" line item in the monthly budget until the balance is repaid. After this time, it continues to pay an ARC membership of 2% of its income.

Life-giving

ARC describes ministry as life-giving when it affirms God's love in Christ, projects a welcoming atmosphere, and is not overly legalistic. This seems to be describing what Lutherans have taught as the proper balance of Law and Gospel.

Contrasts from LC-MS Church Planting Practice

Start Big/Start Right – Billy Hornsby commented, “On the first Sunday, it should look like you have been doing it for 10 years.” While it has been recognized in the LC-MS that large starts are definitely preferred and give missions a greater potential to grow to become large churches, new planters and core groups generally are quite anxious to begin public worship. District leadership often acquiesces. The ARC model provides guidance and resources for outreach to attract a large number of the unchurched to the first worship. It should be expected to pay significant upfront costs for equipment and marketing for the first worship.

Launch team vs. core group – Many LC-MS church plants start as a “coalition of the willing” instead of a “gathering of the gifted.” The ARC model sees the launch team not as a gathering of potential worshippers, but as development of a corps (not core) of leaders who would take particular leadership posts, such as worship, youth, outreach, etc.

Church structure that supports pastoral leadership – Most LC-MS constitutions have structures that lead to people governing the pastor and the pastor doing ministry, even though it may be unintended. In a mission setting, it is imperative that a common vision and direction are established and maintained. The ARC model calls for a structure where the pastor “equips the saints” (Eph 4:12) and the people do ministry. Until the church is well established (perhaps at chartering), the planter is supervised by from the outside. In an LC-MS context, the district staff or others could serve in this role.

Expectation of growth – The ARC model simply presumes that rapid growth is possible and must occur for the ministry to remain viable. The kind of success that ARC has achieved is no doubt startling in LC-MS circles. We have heard for many years from struggling missionaries that it simply will take more time and money to establish a viable ministry.

Financial accountability built into model – The ARC model requires that the ministry assume financial responsibility for itself very quickly as noted above. The professional workers of our Synod are not accustomed to this level of responsibility or to the degree of sacrifice that it may require in order to achieve.

Emphasis on ministry vs. building and land – Among people who have been highly involved in the church their whole lives, it is easy for a mission to be overly concerned with the purchase of land and the construction of the first unit. The ARC model places a strong emphasis on the ministry. With a

strong ministry, there is a greater likelihood to have the necessary human and financial resources to enter into a building program.

LC-MS Pilot

The districts that attended the meeting with Bill Hornsby, agreed to continue to explore how this model could be implemented in the LC-MS. The recommendation of the groups was to form an Executive Committee to manage the implementation of the concept. The appointed members are Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab, Rev. Jeff Miller (Chairman), Mr. Dale Lewis, Mr. Paul Pettit, and Rev. Dr. Mark Larson. The Executive Committee was to appoint an “Architect Team” to design how the model could be implemented. The Executive Committee was then to appoint a “Builder” team that would implement the proposed model. Due to the expectation that model would be developed within about 30 days, the Executive Committee assumed the role of the “Architect Team” because it was felt that it would take too long to bring new members up to speed. For the same reason, the Executive Committee decided to add the necessary additional members to itself to become the Builder Team. The final composition of this team is to be two District Presidents, two Mission Executives, and two LCEF Vice Presidents from the pilot districts, a Seminary professor, Rev. Yohannes Mengsteab and Rev. Jeff Miller.

Each district is to plant one mission for the pilot. The pilot districts designated were:

- English
- Nebraska
- Oklahoma
- Rocky Mountain
- South Wisconsin
- Southeastern
- Southern

Roles and Relationships

ARC – Through the Director, Billy Hornsby, this organization will provide consultation as the LC-MS learns this model and its adaptability for use in the LC-MS through a contractual agreement. The overall goal will be to learn the model successfully and replicate it in the LC-MS. Hornsby will provide initial CPR training and will be available for consultation to monitor the progress of the pilot.

Covenant congregations – These congregations will recruit and mentor church planters and support them according to the model outlined in this document and the description of Covenant Congregations as defined by North American Missions.

Newly planted ministries – Will continue to be committed to church planting by starting new ministries as soon as possible and by supporting the church planting efforts financially by giving at least 10 percent of their offerings to District/Synod missions and 2% to this church planting effort.

Districts – They are the driving force in church planting, managing the pilot in their area, and are responsible to see that the model is followed to the fullest degree possible. LCEF VP's are included for financial advice. Specific district responsibilities for the pilot are

- Recruit one covenant congregation. See Appendix III.
- Identify potential mission planters for assessment. See a profile, Appendix IV.
 - Planters complete online church planter assessment tool. (District pays \$100 fee)
 - Planter is also evaluated through behavioral interviewing
- Provide the matching funds (\$30,000) normally provided by ARC
- Provide ministry income guarantee, up to \$75,000.
- Report the results of the model for assessment by the participating districts.

Synod – For the pilot, they will assess church planters through behavioral interviewing. Upon positive evaluation of the pilot, the role of the Synod will be to

- Promote this new strategy
- Align resources for the new model, such as grants and other support.
- Monitor and evaluate the model and adjust as necessary
- Introduce the model to districts that were not involved in the initial group.

LCEF – They would be involved by supplying building loans and other loan programs for the new starts in the future. There may be some districts that need help raising their own pool. They will assist in maintaining the integrity of the model.

CUSM – Training for pastors and leaders of the covenant congregations.

Timeline

The general timeline adopted at the Las Vegas meeting was further refined by the Executive committee as follows.

May 22 First draft of proposed model to Executive Committee

May 31 Model description sent to participating Districts

June 15 Role of ARC determined/Contract negotiated by Rev. Mengsteab

June 30 Pilot districts recruit sponsoring Covenant Congregations

July 31 Districts report planter nomination to Rev. Mengsteab

August 31 Pilot districts complete recruitment of church planters, based on
Synodical assessment

Sept. 2006 Church planters and appropriate District and Synod staff attend ARC
Church Planters Roundtable

2007 Church planters begin their ministries as appropriate and defined
by the timeline of ARC

Ongoing Results reported to NAME regularly at upcoming Fall and Spring
gatherings.

APPENDIX I: ARC Launch Checklist¹

ARC TIMELINE

Major Milestones:

- Seek God's confirmation on His call to start a church - 1 year
- Pray for a name and location of the church - 1 year
- Move to new city - 4 months
- Incorporate in new state - 4 months
- Develop launch plan and budget - 4 months
- Raise start-up costs - 4 months
 - Write fund raising letter and send out
- Secure location for Sunday services - 3 months
- Development of marketing materials - 3 months
- Equipment and supplies purchased - 3 months
- Conduct advertising in local newspapers, radio, and TV - 1 month
- Send out postcards - 2 weeks
- First service - consult other church planters for good times

Legal and Corporate actions:

- Establish name of the church - 6 months
 - Check with State for rights to name
- Secure web site address using church name - 6 months
- Secure apostolic organization for covering of church and Pastor
- Secure sponsoring church
- Determine (temporary) Board of Directors

¹ Hornsby, Billy. ARC timeline, handout

Write By-laws of the church

Incorporate in new state

See the State Corporation Commission

Secure EIN from Federal Government

Call 1-800-829-0115

Begin paperwork for the 501c3

Get forms from www.irs.gov

Form 8718

Form 8821

Form 1023 (long one)

Set up bank account

Requires State Articles of Incorporation

Secure accountant to establish books and procedures

Select Overseers

Secure location for church services and offices

Ensure enough seating, parking, and childcare facilities

Secure Non-profit bulk mail status and number from Post Office

Get CCLI license for music

Church insurance (corporate and property)

Raise the Launch funds

Establish launch budget

Write fund raising letter and send out

Send to at least 100 friends and family

Try to send to >300

Call your closest friends and ask for support

Determine the power brokers in your town, and set a meeting

Three meeting strategy

Meeting 1 - share the vision

Meeting 2 - how vision helps city

Meeting 3 - ask for support

Travel and preach at different churches (if possible)

Ask God what your own investment could/should be (401 K, houses, cars, jewelry, etc.)

Build Launch team (most important item)

Build a "launch team" of at least 30 or more people to birth the church Hold weekly home meetings for mentoring, training and planning Invite prospects over to your house to share the vision

Network, network, network

Meet with other local Pastors

Neighborhood desert

Neighborhood block party

Get contacts from all sources

Other ARC pastors

Marketing Development

Develop logo for church Develop newspaper ad Develop radio ad

Develop TV ad

Develop direct mail postcard

Pre-launch events

21 Days of prayer and fasting for city revival

Advertise the launch of the church in local newspaper

Press release to local news stations

Advertise the launch on Cable TV

Advertise the launch on radio

Send invitations to the friends of the launch team to a special reception

Reception for friends of the launch team to build relationships and introduce the church

Two Rehearsal Services

Pre-launch party for everyone on the launch team

Direct mail for at least 40,000 homes and up to 80,000 homes

Saturday night prayer meeting the night before the launch

Launch

Opening service

Believing God for at least 200 in opening service

Assume 15% of attendees are children, split evenly between 0-5 and 6-11

Assume that 50% come back for 2nd service

Post launch events

Sunday night visitor/new member orientation - one month after launch

Plan the second wave of direct mail for 6 months after launch

Begin leadership training for first semester of small groups

Launch small groups after first 3-6 months

APPENDIX II: Pre-launch Budget for New Church Start²

Direct mail to 63,000 homes	\$9,500
First month rent for facility and insurance	\$2000
Advertising on TV	\$3000
Advertising on radio	\$3000
Advertising in newspaper	\$1000
Shirts/promotional	\$2000
Reception for friends/family of launch team	\$2000
Sound system, trailer, and instruments	\$25,000
Video projector and screen	\$6000
Tape duplicating machine	\$1300
Nursery and Children's Church	\$4000
All nursery equipment	
Children's curriculum	
Tags/registration	
Decorations (plants, etc.)	\$500
Information center display	\$2000
Signs (indoors and outdoors)	\$1000
Computer/software and office equipment	\$3200
Printing	\$3000
Stationary	
Welcome brochure	
Handouts	

² Hornsby, Billy. Launch Budget for Church Start, handout

Offering envelopes	
Salaries	\$4000
Travel during start-up	\$2000
Telephone (cell phone)	<u>\$500</u>
Total	\$75,000

Remember to include:

Incorporation fees

Chairs (if necessary – we didn't need any)

Website development

APPENDIX III: Ablaze! Covenant Congregation³

Definition:

An *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregation is a congregation that covenants with its respective district and also with LC-MS World Mission to plant up to four (4) congregations by the year 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

I. COVENANT CONGREGATIONS:

A. Congregations are recruited by the district or can be self-identified and be approved by the district. Districts will manage the identification process based on the agreed upon profile of *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations.

B. Congregations have a covenant framed between themselves and their district to plant up to four new congregations by 2017. This covenant will be shared with LC-MS World Mission.

C. Congregations will participate in training offered regionally by the Center for United States Missions. The training can either be part of the identification process before the covenant is framed or may come after the congregations are identified.

D. Congregations have a mission and strategy that is aligned with LC-MS World Mission National New Congregation Development.

E. Congregations which are not ready or capable of daughtering congregations may be referred to the Revitalization facilitator to be prepared to become a congregation planting congregations.

F. Congregations are acceptable to partnering with others to plant up to four new congregations.

³ Mengsteab, Yohannes. *Ablaze! Covenant Congregations*. Handout.

Profile of an Ablaze! Covenant Congregation

Note: the profiles of the Ablaze! Covenant Congregation and pastor are descriptive of and not prescriptive. These are ideal characteristics; there might be some characteristics that are missing but can easily be remedied through training and consultation.

1. The congregation has peace/harmony. This is not an absence of conflict. The congregation is capable of creatively managing conflicts and has properly aligned congregational resources for mission and evangelism.
2. The congregation has evidence of the presence of the five pillars of a healthy congregation: right person, place, vision, resources and structure.
3. The congregation has a mission vision. The congregation is embedded within the community.
4. The congregation is intentional in developing leaders/people/priesthood of all believers.
5. The congregation has good communication of (Vision/Process/Purpose). There is a sense of unity in mission and purpose.
6. The congregation is willing and always ready to learn about mission opportunities and cultural trends in its neighborhood, nation and around the world.
7. The congregation shows a spirit/attitude of churchmanship - trust, beliefs, walking together, integrity in doctrine and practice, and “positive” congregation (i.e., not “Anti-“). Congregation has demonstrated faithfulness to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and willingness to walk alongside her sister congregations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

8. The congregation has a Gospel-centered care system.
9. The congregation shows conversion membership growth - adult confirmations.
10. The congregation shows a steady worship increase.
11. A congregation who a) focuses on the lost; b) know themselves as “Reached People,” Forgiven Sinners; c) demonstrate leadership and exhibit a variety of gifts; d) Are good and faithful stewards; and e) have an active prayer ministry for the lost (prayer is central to the life of the congregation).
12. A congregation who is not waiting for outside funding to do mission work.
 - a. Has a track record of mission-giving to our work together (involvement/investment);
 - b. Prayer - Active prayer ministry for the lost (prayer is central to the life of the congregation).

Profile of Pastoral Leadership (Senior Pastor) of an Ablaze! Covenant Congregation

1. He has a passion for the Lost and is evangelistic;
2. He is an a good administrative leader;
3. He is a visionary and effective communicator;
4. He connects with community, agencies and other churches and pastors;

5. He has the ability to equip others;
6. He is a strategic planner, thoughtful;
7. He possesses good “people skills” especially with sinners;
8. He is a life-long learner of community and Word;
9. He is collegial (“synod” in all that it means)
 - a. Willingness and ability to “walk together”
 - b. Trust
 - c. Commitment to unity;
 - d. Prayer life, spiritual growth
 - e. Truly understands and conveys the Faith.

II. TRAINING ABLAZE! COVENANT CONGREGATIONS

A. Training I: church planting orientation workshop will be available to all Ablaze! Covenant Congregations at which the pastor and key leaders of the AC congregations will have to attend.

B. Training II: The senior pastor or a staff member from the AC congregation must take Basic Mission Planter Training.

C. Training III: Mission planter will engage in the Mission Planter Development Process, which is a two year process that includes Basic Mission Planter Training, the Edge Gathering (an annual conference event of planters and spouses in a successful church plant for sharing and refreshment), and Advanced Mission Planter Training.

III. PLANTER IDENTIFICATION:

A. It has been realized that successful congregational development depends on three major factors: **the right place, the right person (planter) and the right plan.** In other words the identification of the planter is very critical to the new congregation development. An indigenous congregational planter is preferred to that of an “outsider.” This reduces the time that a planter would spend in studying the landscape and developing the right plan for the plant.

B. New Planters should be coming from:

1. Ablaze! Covenant Congregations
2. District-called missionary-at-large
3. Recommended by the National Affiliates

C. A Planter can be self-identified: certain personalities come to the forefront, i.e., engaging, using theology in life, family/spousal support, etc.

D. Pastors of Ablaze! Covenant Congregations may identify gifted members based on a profile for effective church planters.

Planter Qualifications:

A. To confirm the potential for church planting, an instrument developed by the Gallop organization may be administered to candidate planter. This is computer-scored and based on a profile of successful planters. The result will give one of these recommendations: highly recommended, guardedly recommended or not recommended. The cost is \$100 per planter candidate.

B. Seminary Mission Formation program, which prepares seminarians for congregation development, requires that each student in the program take the Ridley Behavioral Interview before acceptance into the program.

Profile of a Successful Church Planter:

1. Visionary - the candidate is able to assess what is now and envision a preferred future.
2. Intrinsic motivation - the candidate has an inner drive and is not waiting to get permission from others when it is appropriate to address issues him/herself;
3. Creates ownership - is able to bring people along and create ownership of the task at hand;
4. Reaches the unchurched - has demonstrated the ability to build relationships with the unchurched and witness to them;
5. Has spousal cooperation - spouse support is evident.
6. Relationship building - the candidate has excellent people skills; is able to build relationships and sustain them;
7. Mission/Evangelism - the candidate has demonstrated a passion for mission and evangelism;
8. Responsive to the community - candidate has a demonstrated ability to address community needs;
9. Uses the gifts of others - has demonstrated that he is able to surround himself with others who have gifts and talents that complement his;
10. Flexibility - flexibility in dealing with others/issues;

11. Builds cohesive groups - able to help groups deal with polarizing issues to bring them together rather than apart;

12. Resilience - has a demonstrated ability to work through difficult situations and succeed;

13. Exercises Faith - has a demonstrated prayer life, strong faith and trust for God to guide his way.

IV. PASTORAL PLANTER TRAINING:

A. Seminary Residential Mission Formation Track Student:

1. After student is accepted into the program, during their third year, vicarage is delayed; student takes some missional courses and attends a one-day seminar in Groups Ablaze!, Daughter Church Planting, Team Ministry, and three field trips.

2. Final year is vicarage, when students will have a well-rounded vicarage experience with an Ablaze! Covenant Congregation and also strategize for the new church plant.

3. Student attends Basic Mission Planter Training during the vicarage year; this begins the two year Mission Planter Development process, which includes collegial groups, Edge Gathering, and Advanced Mission Planter Training.

B. Non-Residentially Trained Planter:

1. Planter will have the commitment to engage in distance theological education to be certified for ordination, especially those planting self-standing congregations.

2. Planter will engage in the two-year Mission Planter Development Process: Basic Mission Planter Training, Collegial Groups, Edge Gathering, and Advanced Planter Training.

V. FUNDING/SUPPORT OF ABLAZE! COVENANT CONGREGATIONS

A. *Ablaze!* grants will be primarily available to *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations - always remember these three factors: right place, right person, and right plan.

B. Funds will also be available through the Fan into Flame campaign to *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations.

C. Other funding sources will also be identified and made available to *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations.

D. Church Development Partners, a Not-for-Profit Development organization, affiliated with LCEF will also be available to help with land procurement and development processes.

E. Open Arms Institute, an early childhood ministry development organization, affiliated with North American Missions and LCEF will also be available to *Ablaze!* Covenant Congregations.

APPENDIX IV: Church Planter Profile⁴

Why is the selection of the mission planter so important?

Observations show that the most important factor, from a human perspective, for the success of a mission planting endeavor is the gifts of the mission planter. In our culture, which is increasingly ambivalent or even hostile to Christianity, the proper giftedness of the missionary is essential.

What kind of person makes a good mission planter?

Mission planting requires special God-given gifts. God has not given them to everyone. The selection of a mission planter is a spiritual process to be led by the Spirit and in the context of prayer. Even though it is a spiritual process, God works through human means. Diligent preparation is in order before making a selection. Much research has been done to discover what characteristics mark those who have successfully started mission congregations. Mission planter selection considers such research as well as identifying unique needs for its own ministry.

Some research has claimed to identify which personality types tend to perform the best in mission planting situations. One study used *Personal Profile Systems* (Carlson Learning Company n.d., 7) to rank personalities best suited as lone mission planters. Using the DISC profile (D- Dominance, I- Influence, C- Conscientiousness, S- Steadiness), Malphurs concludes, “Those who score as High D’s or I’s or a combination of either on the Personal Profile . . . are usually best suited for this position of leadership⁵.”

Figure 1. Worship Attendance Growth by Personality Type ⁶

Personality Type	Attendance after One Year	Attendance after Several Years ⁷
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⁴ Larson, Mark. *Mission Planting Catechism*, pp. 39-41

⁵ Malphurs, Aubrey. *Planting Growing Churches*, p. 103

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 103

⁷ The length of time in this column varies according to category: Dominance, 5.2 years; Influence, 3.6 years; Steadiness, 6.3 years; Conscientiousness, 4.3 years

High Dominance	72	181
High Influence	98	174
High Conscientiousness	39	71
High Steadiness	38	77

People with high “Dominance” and “Influence” traits tend to be strong leaders who are concerned about their constituents’ following their lead based on intrinsic motivation, as opposed to coercion.

What characteristics are important in mission planters?

Charles Ridley⁸ (1988, 7) has identified what he believes are important traits for church planters. While he enumerates 48 general traits, he narrows the list to 13 crucial characteristics for successful church planting.

1. Visionizing capacity
2. Intrinsically motivated
3. Creates ownership of ministry
4. Relates to the unchurched
5. Spousal cooperation
6. Effectively builds relationships
7. Committed to church growth
8. Responsive to the community
9. Utilizes giftedness of others
10. Flexible and adaptable
11. Builds group cohesiveness
12. Resilience
13. Exercises faith

⁸ Ridley, Charles. How to Select Church Planters, p. 7

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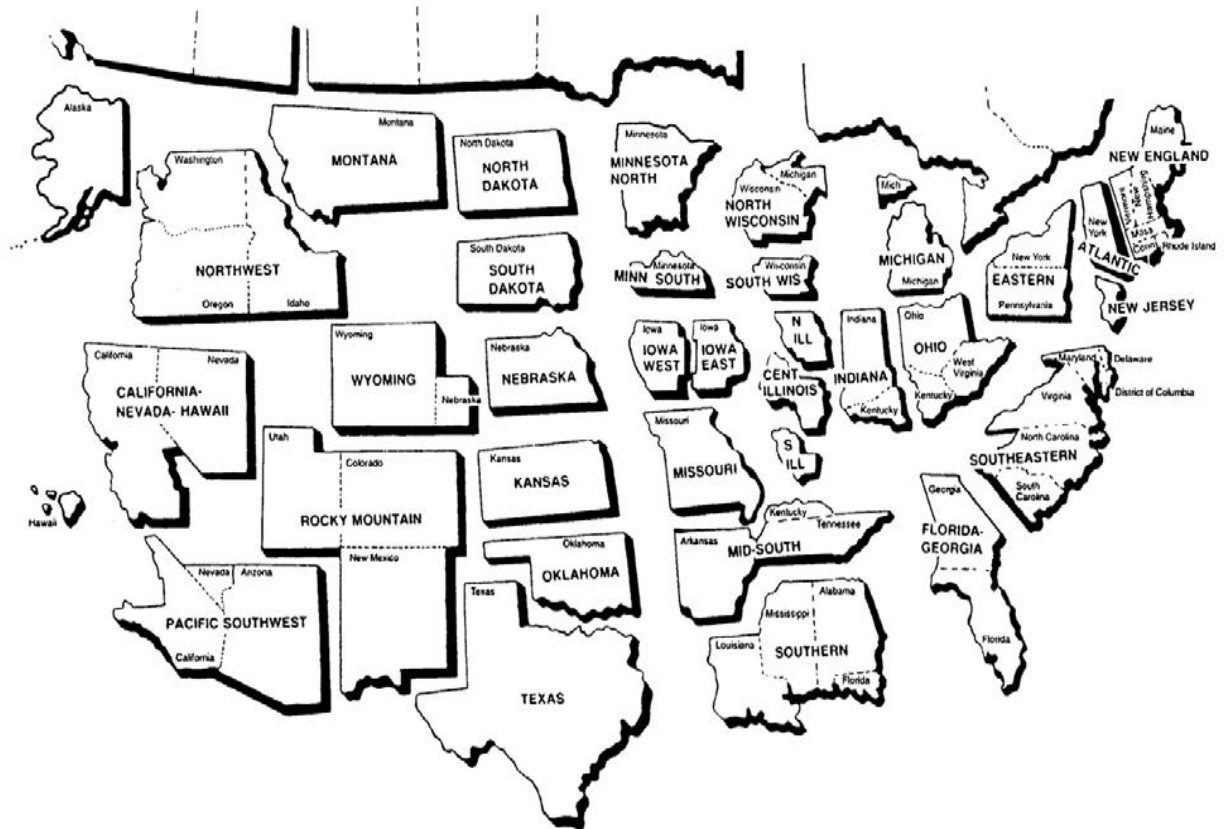
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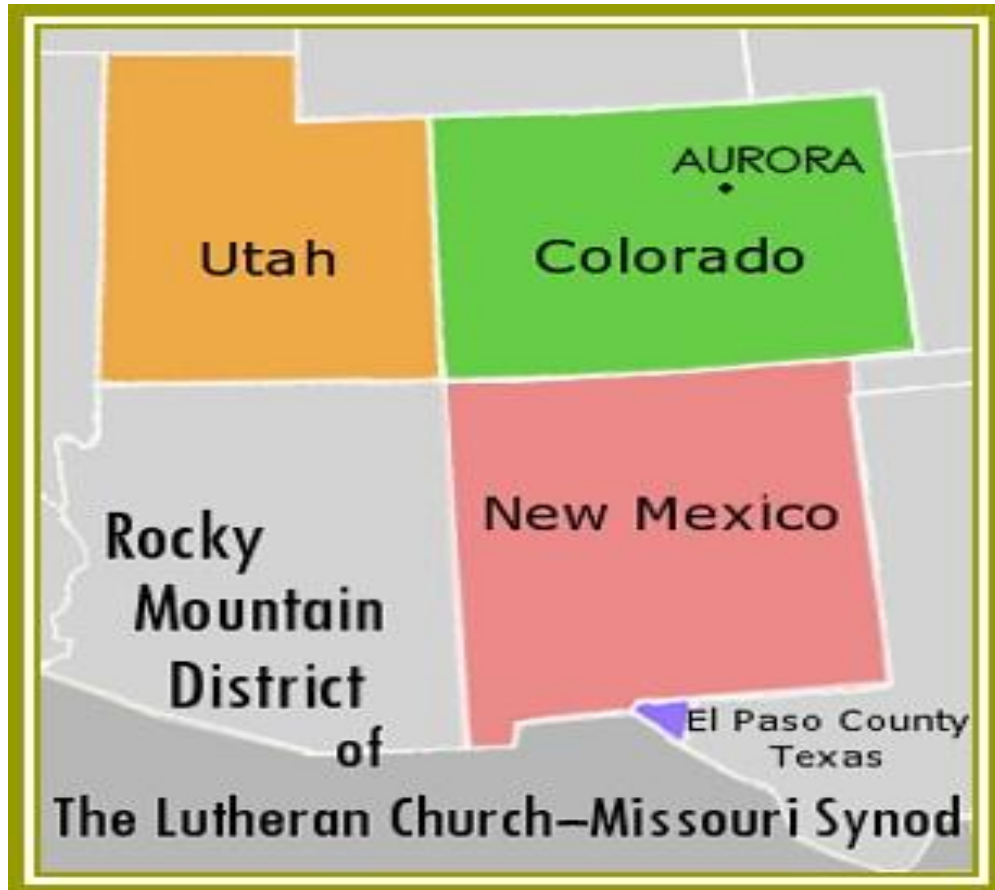
APPENDIX TWO

Map of the Geographical Districts of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



APPENDIX THREE

Map of the Rocky Mountain District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



APPENDIX FOUR

Email from the Rev. Dr. John Nordling to the Rev. President Golter

RE: latest Concordia Journal - Yahoo! Mail

Page 1 of 2



RE: latest Concordia Journal

Monday, August 4, 2008 10:30 AM

From: "Nordling, John G." <john.nordling@ctsfsf.edu>
To: rigolter@yahoo.com

President Golter:

I also have read the Kloha article, and have concluded that it is a good piece (in fact, I already sent a congratulatory e-mail to Jeff yesterday). What Dr. Kloha does is to show that EKKLESIA can have multiple meanings in the NT: (1) individual congregation/cell; (2) trans-congregation (what we might call "synod," cf. Acts 15); and (3) una sancta = the church of every time and place. These three meanings merge into each other, already during Paul's lifetime. I am convinced, for example, that Paul intended his letters to have a greater weight than just to the individual congregations for whom they were addressed. No, as Kloha also shows, Paul intended that his letters would be exchanged among the congregations already during his lifetime (for example, Colossians 4.16), and P. also must have intended that his letters would continue to be read as long as there would be a church, as the numbers of Christians grew in number and in insight, until Christ returns in glory (cf. Nordling, Philemon, 342 ff., espec. 349, on the final blessing of grace, Philemon 25).

There is much that I could say here, and most of it goes against the "business mentality" that seems to be emerging in the modern LCMS ("we are a corporation, but not a church," so we can have OUR OWN doctrine and practice!). That is a bunch of "hocey," and very much against the NT and where our synodical fathers have walked in the past. Aside from Dr. Kloha's excellent demonstration that the "entire church"—that is, clusters of congregations did meet from time to time to decide doctrine and practice (Acts 15)—consider the little passage (1 Cor. 14.23) "so if the whole church comes together [HE EKKLESIA HOLE EPI TO AUTO]..."

That passage must demonstrate that, at Corinth too, "clusters" of individual congregations came together sometimes, probably for worship and prayer (always), but also for strategic reasons (mission, the collection), and to determine God-pleasing doctrine and practice. It was all under apostolic oversight—or, failing that, the apostolic ministry (as today, provided that there still will remain a holy ministry and we don't lose it to those who want our seminary graduates to learn less and less!). Hear what Dr. Wayne Meeks writes in *The First Urban Christians* (Yale, 1983, pg. 75-76):

"The phrase KAT OIKON does not designate merely the place where the EKKLESIA met, although the commonest English translation is 'the church in N[ame's] house.' For that, EN OIKO would be the more natural expression (see 1 Cor. 11:34; 14:35). Rather, Paul probably uses KAT OIKON to distinguish these individual household-based groups from 'the whole church' (HOLE HE EKKLESIA), which could also assemble on occasion (1 Cor. 14.23; Rom. 16.23; cf. 1 Cor. 11.20), or from the still larger manifestations of the Christian movement, for which he could use the same term, EKKLESIA. The KAT OIKON EKKLESIA is thus the 'basic cell' of the Christian movement, and its nucleus was often an existing household. As we saw earlier, the household was much broader than the family in modern Western societies, including not only immediate relatives but also slaves, freedmen, hired workers, and sometimes tenants and partners in trade or craft..."

Thus, in addition to 1 Cor. 14.23, cf. also Rom. 16.23; 1 Cor. 11.20. In these three passages, and in many more, it cannot be the individual congregation that is meant, but "trans-congregational" gatherings, or even the una sancta.

Hence, if forced to choose, I definitely would say that "synod" is church, and that this has deep implications not only for someone such as yourself (district president, and so very close to a "bishop," biblically speaking), but also for someone such as myself (sem professor, so DOCTOR ECCLESIAE).

Hope this helps,

John

From: randall golter [mailto:rigolter@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, August 03, 2008 5:58 PM
To: Nordling, John G.

<http://us.mc322.mail.yahoo.com/mc/showMessage?fid=Inbox&sort=date&order=down&sta...> 8/4/2008

APPENDIX FIVE

Presentation by President Randall L. Golter to the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain District on the GGP

Mission Plan: The Gospel Gap Paradigm

President Randall L. Golter

Questions about the Gospel Gap Paradigm

1. What is the Gospel Gap Paradigm?

The Gospel Gap Paradigm is the proposed pattern for the Church (185 parishes) in the Rocky Mountain District to carry out the Triune God's mission in this region.

B. What is the "Gospel Gap"?

The "Gospel Gap" is where the Triune God's Word of Law and Gospel is not heard, where the Gospel is not preached. The "gap" may be in a town, city, region, or a people group, such as the Hispanics, Ethiopians, Sudanese, etc.

3. What is the Biblical basis for this work?

The Church is called by God to be the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13). Jesus says of her, "You are..." His words are descriptive of reality, the Church *is* the salt and the scope of the salting *is* the whole earth. The Church is God's tool to salt the earth with His Word to rescue sinners from sin, death and eternal damnation. The Triune God carries out this salting process through each of the seventeen Circuits in their region, acting and being Church in their context.

4. How does this look in each Circuit?

The local Church--individual and collective parishes in a region--is to steward this salting in their place, the casting of God's Word of Law and Gospel and the administration of the holy Sacraments. Each circuit then identifies, prioritizes, strategizes, and implements the mission in their region.

The Northeastern Circuit of the RMD, for example, has identified the Hispanic people as a Gospel Gap, and have made this gap priority number one. It does mean that other gaps don't exist, cities or villages or areas of a certain town where no Gospel is preaching. These churches have collected nearly \$55,000 to call a Spanish speaking pastor who will lead the effort. They have identified Trinity, Sterling, as the mother

congregation; yet, this is a whole circuit effort. They may ask of District for resources, including funding, for this effort is an effort of the Church, the one Church in this region.

The Northeastern Circuit has emphasized that this funding is *above and beyond* their giving to the District, for the mission work and life together that is done beyond the boundaries of this circuit and into the world.

The Rocky Flats Circuit has identified the University Lutheran Chapel (ULC) as a high Gospel gap. For if that ministry fails, the Boulder campus would lose a significant Gospel proclamation. The circuit churches have partnered with ULC in many significant ways, including funding. The District in addition supplies \$40,000 a year.

Pastor Bolt of the Sangre de Cristo circuit has mentioned Trinidad as a Gospel Gap. Lutherans who have recently moved there have expressed interest in getting a church established. Plans have no shape at this point.

These stories are being repeated around the District. People are beginning to look for Gospel Gaps and make plans to make it happen. This can only be done when this is done together, individuals, parishes, circuits, and the District. This is what it means to have a life together as His Church under the Cross.

5. How does the GGP relate to our life together for mission needs beyond the Circuit?

The Church is larger than one Circuit or District, or Synod, and yet each parish is fully God's Church. The living power of God's Word (John 6:63) is evident in the Church wherever she is manifested. We must not become, however, extreme congregationalists and isolated circuits or districts apart from the larger Church by our polity or actions. The binding of course is not constitution or bylaws but the Word of God and the Confessions. Such binding compels all to work and act together as His Church. This organic binding is shown by the cooperative efforts of kingdom preservation and expansion. The GGP is just one cooperative effort.

Christ animates His Church for work together wherever He is working (John 5:17), wherever He causes His Word to be published and preached, whether parish, circuit, district, and synod. His unconstrained generosity to absolute receivers given through His Word erupts a joy within the Church, a song sung in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10).

5. How are the Laity involved?

The Church must not deprive the laity of the joy of being involved in mission. The laity along with the pastors are called by God to steward the mission, as Church. They too must have eyes to see the harvest (John 4:35). They too are pressed and pushed by God to speak the Gospel in their place, as they have His Spirit through baptism as a deposit. They will supply the eyes, ears, hands and feet for this mission effort, giving of themselves in sacrificial ways for the advance of the kingdom.

6. Tell me more about Funding.

As each Circuit stewards their mission field, they may ask and press their need to the Church at large (the collection of the 185 churches represented by District) for additional funding. We do God's mission together as all are able! The request should be made to the District by October 1 of each year. The BOD reviews an initial Mission and Ministry Plan (MMP) in November and passes the MMP the following January. Of course, a Circuit must show they are invested in this mission effort through time, talent and/or treasure. The District will not see a high value to commit if the Circuit is not invested themselves.

The mission is God's, and He will supply the funding for His mission through His people. He has supplied the lack for His mission since Genesis 3.

7. What are Circuit Mission Agents (CMA)?

The Circuit designates a Circuit Mission Agent in their midst, a pastor or layman. The CMA is to lead the GGP effort. The CMA must hold high God's mission in each Circuit in every way possible. The CMA is responsible for bringing the parish representatives together for stewarding God's mission. Through the CMA the request of funds comes to the District.

8. Fundamentally, what does the GGP require?

Humility, trust, love (Phi. 2: 4 ff.; Col. 3:14) among the pastors and congregations, for the Lord and His Church, and for the lost. The GGP requires the circuits to be Church in their region (Acts 9:31). If there are disagreements of any kind, e.g. doctrine, etc., then discussion over the Lord's doctrine should--must--happen! The Church ever should and truly does love to discuss the Lord's doctrine, for doctrine saves (1 Timothy 4:16). The Lord of the Church highly prizes unity (Ps. 133; 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 12:12 ff.; Eph. 4:1 ff.). The Church therefore also highly prizes the gift of unity given by the Lord, and eagerly seeks to maintain it, as she fulfills her vocation of salt and light to the whole world.

We *must* not let our divisions hinder the advancement of the kingdom. At the same time, we *must* not ignore truly divisive teachings contrary to our doctrine or loveless actions among us. The Lord's love for the Church compels her to walk a worthy life that exhibits the new creation that she is in the midst of this old creation.

Luther writes in his commentary on 1 Peter:

God "permits us to live here on earth in order that we may bring others to faith, just as he brought us to faith."

"You must, says Peter, exercise the chief function of a priest, that is, to proclaim the wonderful deed God has performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light. Your preaching should be done in such a way that one brother proclaims the mighty deed of God to the other, how you have been delivered through Him from sin, hell, death, and all misfortune, and have been called to eternal life....Let it be your chief work to proclaim this publicly and to call everyone into the light into which you have been called" (LW 30:11).

APPENDIX SIX

President Golter's article sent to participants in both the Aurora and Albuquerque training sessions to introduce the Gospel Gap Paradigm

Gospel Gap Paradigm

John 4:35, *"Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest."*

Is it not interesting how the Lord saw the need to instruct His disciples in the story of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well? Why did they not get it, that is, not know that the harvest field was right before their very eyes?

The disciples had gone into Sychar to buy food (John 4:8). They did not see what the Lord saw in Sychar, a city full of lost sinners for whom He would shed His blood as payment for their sins. They saw it only as a place to buy food, not to spread the Word.

Is it not interesting how gentle and patient our Lord is with His disciples? He uses a woman to teach them that the church's purpose is redemptive, that is, the saving of souls. And the boundary is as broad and as wide as the Father's heart is full of mercy.

I am proposing a new mission paradigm for the Rocky Mountain District which is fundamentally a "circuit-based church planting model." It is based on the cell phone coverage metaphor.

See each of the seventeen circuits within the RMD as cell-phone coverage areas. Each church is a cell tower which transmits signals, the preaching of the Gospel.

There are gaps, though, where the Gospel is not transmitted, not being heard. These "gaps" may be geographic or demographic. The Northeastern Circuit of Colorado, for example, sees their GGP as the Hispanics in their midst. God's people there in Holyoke and Sterling and Ft. Morgan, etc., are going to call a Hispanic pastor in the spring of 2011. They are identifying, strategizing, implementing, and, with collaboration from their larger church family, the RMD, will plant missions to reach out to the Hispanics.

Where are the Gospel Gaps around you? Are you like the disciples who saw only places to buy food but not the souls that are lost in unbelief?

The Gospel Gap Paradigm places the joyful responsibility of stewarding the Triune God's mission at the circuit level first but not only there where the eyes and hearts are closest to the ground. The larger church, represented by the District, will help build capacity for each of the circuits through training, motivation, financial support, ecclesiastical supervision, etc.

Together, *together*, bound by Christ's voice revealed in His Word, we cooperate in the Triune God's mission. In reality, we are trying to catch up to Him. He is always on the move, seeking and saving the lost through the preaching of His shed blood.

APPENDIX SEVEN

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE AURORA TRAINING FEBRUARY 16-17, 2011

Please answer as clearly and concisely as you can. Thank you for your help.

What do you understand the Gospel Gap Paradigm (GGP) to be?

AU1: For circuits to identify and then take ownership of mission opportunities in their circuits.

AU2: A return to the circuits as the primary starting point for missions including funding and support.

AU3: Circuits collaborating to plant churches where there are none in the circuit's geographical area.

AU4: Coverage of geographies, people groups, etc. where the Gospel is not reaching

What is the role of the following entities regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AU1: Joining together w/circuits to identify/support and use gifts for missions.

AU2: No response.

AU3: To either lead a church plant or support other lead churches.

AU4: Primary—equipping the saints to spread the Gospel

The circuit:

AU1: Circuits will identify and take ownership for their area.

AU2: The circuit is to equip and mobilize the local congregations for reaching the lost.

AU3: To strategize church plants and identify needs of the community.

AU4: Supportive of local congregations. Leadership in cross-congregational efforts.

The district:

AU1: Has a larger view than circuits and will be supported by congregations for special projects.

AU2: The district equips and trains circuits for the same [reaching the lost]. Especially “district wide” missions.

AU3: To approve circuit recommendations for new plants and support when/where possible.

AU4: Vision casting. Resources for identifying the targets. Training and mentoring to help circuits and congregations.

The Synod:

AU1: Has a wider view than districts to identify world mission projects.

AU2: Equip districts and congregations to reach lost all over the world.

AU3: Theological guidelines

AU4: Vision casting globally. Seminaries and learning institutions focused on identifying and equipping people to reach the lost.

How effective are the following entities in accomplishing their roles regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AU1: Some congregations are very effective but most are not.

AU2: No response.

AU3: Depends on the congregation, but I see high potential at this level.

AU4: Mostly internal focused so not very effective.

The circuit:

AU1: Currently most circuits are doing little in this area.

AU2: Very.

AU3: In my experience, circuit meetings have not been very mission focused up to this point.

AU4: Our circuit—not very effective

The district:

AU1: Districts are identifying and trying to do this but not getting enough support.

AU2: Somewhat.

AU3: I don't have enough experience to comment.

AU4: Limited resources have affected

The Synod:

AU1: Synod is identifying missions but cannot accomplish this without the support of congregations.

AU2: Not at all.

AU3: Fair.

AU4: In transition so we don't know.

How well do the congregations of your circuit *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AU1: Very well!

AU2: Not at all.

AU3: In general, my circuit works together well, but we have yet to do a joint mission plant.

AU4: Not very well. There seem to be too many differences on how to approach this.

How well do the circuits of the Rocky Mountain District *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AU1: Not at all that I'm aware of.

AU2: Fairly well.

AU3: I have yet to see this happen

AU4: I haven't seen any joint working together or been part of circuit to circuit discussions. My impression is that they typically don't work together.

Do you believe that your *local congregation* is the "Church" (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: Yes. There is Word and sacrament.

AU2: Yes. It is God's people gathered around Word and sacrament.

AU3: Yes—Word and sacrament ministry

AU4: It's a part of the "church" but is a part of the greater church on earth. Called and equipped by God to participate in the restoration of Creation.

Do you believe that your *circuit* is the "Church" (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: No. This is at the local congregation.

AU2: Yes, but our LC-MS polity doesn't because they [the circuit] can't "call" a missionary.

AU3: Yes—this is what Dr. Kloha from the St. Louis seminary describes as the Trans-Congregational church.

AU4: Again—a part.

Do you believe that the *Rocky Mountain Districts* is the "Church" (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: No. Same as above.

AU2: Yes, it is God's people gathered around Word and sacrament in a geographical area.

AU3: Yes—Trans congregational church.

AU4: Same.

Do you believe that *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* is the "Church" (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: No. Same as above.

AU2: Yes—same as above.

AU3: Yes—Trans-congregational church.

AU4: Same. (Participant drew a sort of Venn diagram with a circle representing the "set" of the Church—labeling the local church connected to a subset labeled "polity" containing circuit, district and synod. God is drawn as "above" the "set" of the Church.)

APPENDIX EIGHT

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE AURORA TRAINING

FEBRUARY 16-17, 2011

Please answer as clearly and concisely as you can. Thank you for your help.

What do you understand the Gospel Gap Paradigm (GGP) to be?

AU1: To reach the lost wherever they might be. This will be done by each circuit identifying where the lost are in their circuit. This could be an entire ethnic group or a physical location.

AU2: It moves responsibility for identifying “missionable” areas of a Circuit, to the Circuit—both pastoral leadership and laity. District and perhaps Synod will be partners, supporting this work.

AU3: The GGP is a mission planting effort intended to give local congregations and circuits a greater role in the planting process.

AU4: Covering unreached areas and people with the Gospel, counting on circuits to work together and the CMA to lead this cooperation.

What is the role of the following entities regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AU1: The local church is to reach out starting in their area and then supporting missions throughout the world.

AU2: Identifying, supporting, being involved.

AU3: To support its circuit’s GGP efforts however possible.

AU4: The local congregation is the key to mission planting. This is the way Paul planted churches and my congregation is following his pattern.

The circuit:

AU1: Currently, the circuits don’t seem to have any official role in missions but some circuits do work together to support missions at the district and Synod level. With the

GGP the role of the circuit will change drastically as they will now identify and work toward mission planting in their circuit along with the district's help.

AU2: Identifying, supporting, planning, organizing, facilitating.

AU3: To identify Gospel gaps, create a strategy for filling those gaps and then implement those strategies.

AU4: My circuit is hostile to planting new churches in areas where they feel threatened. If the GGP is going to work, circuits cannot be run by fear.

The district:

AU1: Currently the district identifies where a mission is needed in its district and also supports missions done at the Synod level.

AU2: Encouraging, being responsive, supporting.

AU3: To provide resources for the circuits as they move forward with the GGP.

AU4: The district will still hold the funding for the support of mission plants. The district can see the needs everywhere—so congregations will need to support both the district and their own missions.

The Synod:

AU1: Identifies world missions and supports them financially and with personnel.

AU2: Overarching, general support, perhaps financial support, encouraging, training and enabling.

AU3: I am still unclear as to how the Synod will support the GGP effort. Pats on the back?

AU4: I am not clear what the Synod's role will be after the restructuring process is finished. I would look to the Synod to set the vision and provide training for planters.

How effective are the following entities in accomplishing their roles regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AU1: Some local congregations do a great job in this, but the vast majority do little or nothing. There is too much focus on the needs of the local congregation instead of the lost.

AU2: Well, that's a long discussion; good in some respects, poor in other respects.

AU3: This is potentially the most effective entity in accomplishing the GGP. It is in the local congregation that the rubber meets the road.

AU4: My congregation is very effective in identifying new areas for mission and strategizing how to initiate mission plants.

The circuit:

AU1: Other than the circuit I am in I haven't heard of any circuit doing mission planting or reaching the lost.

AU2: At this point, not that effective, but the potential is great.

AU3: The circuit serves well when it helps coordinate efforts of individual congregations so that congregations are walking in unity with each other.

AU4: The pastors in my circuit are fearful that new missions will take their members and so they are opposed to working together with my congregation. I don't think the GGP will help.

The district:

AU1: I think the district does the best that it can with the resources that it has. Unfortunately, the district doesn't get enough support from local congregations to be as effective as it needs to be.

AU2: I'd have to say that our district has been pretty good about this—some opportunities have just come to us. I believe that the GGP is the best way for the district to become more effective, if they have a genuine commitment to supporting it.

AU3: The district will not be most effective at locating or implementing the mission, but rather supporting circuits in their GGP efforts.

AU4: I would hope the GGP would be a way that the congregations of the district could work together. However, I think the challenges to be overcome are pretty large.

The Synod:

AU1: I think the Synod is in the same place as the districts are, they do the best they can with what they have. But the Synod doesn't have the resources it needs to be able to do a great job.

AU2: This too would be a long discussion; in some respects the Synod has been quite encouraging; in other respects; we have been somewhat distracted, and we have some important discussions upcoming in regard to what really constitutes the "making of disciples."

AU3: ???

AU4: I am not very familiar with what the Synod is presently doing in the area of church planting. I assume that its effectiveness will be determined by what resources are available.

How well do the congregations of your circuit *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AU1: Very well. Not every congregation participates at the same level but every congregation is involved to some extent. I also feel that the participation of the congregation is greatly influenced by the priorities of the pastor.

AU2: I think we have a very solid commitment to working together, and are all on the same page about this—but we have been somewhat stifled and disappointed by the previous dynamics with district.

AU3: [My] circuit has been a relatively healthy group of pastors for the 5+ years I have been a part of it. This year we have committed to spend a longer amount of time with each other at our Winkels (4 hrs as opposed to 2 hrs) with the hope of strengthening our already strong relationships and being able to spend the necessary time to implement the GGP successfully.

AU4: Some of the pastors have been openly hostile to me personally as I am leading a church plant in a nearby community. While the circuit as a whole approved the move, I feel the resistance from these pastors will keep me from serving as a CMA.

How well do the circuits of the Rocky Mountain District *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AU1: I don't have a great deal of knowledge about this but my impression is that they don't work together at all.

AU2: Again, I believe the circuits would work together well, and are all on the same page, if the right dynamics were in place, and the GGP provides the best opportunity for this.

AU3: My understanding is that there are healthy circuits and sadly also several very dysfunctional circuits. My guess is that on the whole our circuits work together quite poorly in mission planting.

Do you believe that your *local congregation* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: Yes. It is doing Word and sacrament in our area.

AU2: Definitely, the marks of the church.

AU3: Yes. Word and sacrament ministry.

AU4: The “church” is the body of Christ working in the world to restore Creation to our Creator. The local congregation is part of the body of Christ and is called by God to participate in His work of restoration.

Do you believe that your *circuit* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: No. Word and sacrament are not done at this level.

AU2: Definitely, the communion of saints—all believers, and especially believers of the same confession as we are.

AU3: Yes. I believe the circuit is what Dr. Jeff Kloha refers to as the trans-congregational church.

AU4: The circuit congregations are members of the body of Christ.

Do you believe that the *Rocky Mountain Districts* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: No. Word and sacrament are not done at this level.

AU2: Definitely, not the corporate entity, but the believers who constitute the district—for the district is organized and incorporated precisely to facilitate congregations [marks of the church].

AU3: Yes. This is simply a larger expression of the trans-congregational church.

AU4: As I answered above, the district is a part of the body of Christ.

Do you believe that *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AU1: No. Word and sacrament are not done at this level.

AU2: Definitely, because of the believers who belong, and the specific “churchly” work the Synod is established to help and facilitate, marks of the church, Word and sacrament ministry of “making disciples.”

AU3: Yes. It is a still larger expression of the trans-congregational church.

AU4: It is a part of the body of Christ.

APPENDIX NINE

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ALBUQUERQUE TRAINING

MAY 24, 2011

Please answer as clearly and concisely as you can. Thank you for your help.

What do you understand the Gospel Gap Paradigm (GGP) to be?

AL1: A new way of looking at our circuits to identify the “gaps” in Word and sacrament ministry.

AL2: Inspired by gaps in cell phone coverage—to help see the gaps in the proclamation of the Gospel in our district.

AL3: Reach those areas not being reached by the Gospel.

AL4: A way to look beyond each congregation’s needs for the sake of the Gospel.

AL5: A way to identify places where the Gospel is not being preached.

What is the role of the following entities regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AL1: Knows the area and its needs.

AL2: Primary source of knowledge about the area.

AL3: Boots on the ground

AL4: Know the needs of the area and who can support the work.

AL5: Should be the beginning point for reaching the lost.

The circuit:

AL1: Mutually support and encourage one another—work together for mission

AL2: A source of knowledge combined from all the congregations.

AL3: Supports the local congregations.

AL4: Identify where congregations can work together.

AL5: To help congregations work together for the sake of the lost.

The district:

AL1: Has a geographic perspective and resources beyond the circuit.

AL2: Encourages mission among congregations and circuits.

AL3: Supports local work.

AL4: Supports the local congregations

AL5: To help circuits help congregations get resources

The Synod:

AL1: Works primarily on foreign missions—some oversight of district work.

AL2: Provides training of pastors and missionaries

AL3: Mostly on international missions

AL4: To help districts help congregations

AL5: Provides training and expertise for mission planting

How effective are the following entities in accomplishing their roles regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AL1: Often, congregations are busy with their own needs.

AL2: Not very effective—let someone else do it

AL3: Local congregations are on the edge of the mission field, ready to go.

AL4: I think many local congregations focus on their own needs first.

AL5: I think the effectiveness varies.

The circuit:

AL1: I think the distances between the congregations in our circuits limit our effectiveness in working together.

AL2: Circuits talk about working together in mission, but little seems to happen.

AL3: Our circuit has been talking about how we might work together on a project across the Mexican border.

AL4: Our circuit congregations have discussed working together but as yet nothing has been done.

AL5: Effectiveness varies from circuit to circuit.

The district:

AL1: Has done some good things in the past.

AL2: Has been the primary point for missions until now.

AL3: I really don't know.

AL4: Some work the district has begun has brought good results, but they could be more effective.

AL5: I see the desire on the part of the district to plant missions but I'm not sure of how effective past models have been.

The Synod:

AL1: I think the present financial woes the Synod is facing have limited our effectiveness.

AL2: The Synod has done well sending missionaries overseas.

AL3: I'm not sure.

AL4: I am not sure.

AL5: Synod has done well training pastors and providing leadership and help to congregations.

How well do the congregations of your circuit *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AL1: In our circuit, we work together pretty well.

AL2: Distance is a problem that keeps us from doing things together.

AL3: I see things improving in this area within our circuit.

AL4: Congregations in our circuit are separated by great distances so we don't work together often.

AL5: I see things improving.

How well do the circuits of the Rocky Mountain District *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AL1: I think the structure of the district discourages activities between circuits—certainly distance is a problem.

AL2: I don't know much about circuits other than the one I'm in.

AL3: Distance keeps us from working well together.

AL4: I don't think we do much together.

AL5: I'm not aware of much interaction.

Do you believe that your *local congregation* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes—we have Christ's Great Commission and that also joins us in mission with the larger “church.”

AL2: Yes—it is the location where the Word is preached and the sacraments administered.

AL3: Yes—we serve the local area with the Gospel but are also a part of the larger church.

AL4: Yes—the Word of God is preached there and God's people receive the sacraments

AL5: Yes—we are gathered in His name around His promise.

Do you believe that your *circuit* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes. The Great Commission holds the local congregations together to work as the circuit for the sake of fulfilling Christ's command.

AL2: I'm not sure I would call it that—the local congregation is truly “church” but we hold a common confession and mutually care for one another.

AL3: Yes—we have a common mission and can assist each other in this mission.

AL4: Yes—the circuit draws its existence from the local congregations working together.

AL5: Yes—but more as a structure or extension of the local churches together

Do you believe that the *Rocky Mountain Districts* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes because it is all the congregations together.

AL2: Again, I'm not really sure I'd use the word “church.”

AL3: We have a common confession and the district oversees doctrine, so we are church on some level.

AL4: Yes—districts draw their existence from the congregations in the circuits.

AL5: Yes—Christians gather as the district in the various congregations—the Word and sacraments are given in those congregations.

Do you believe that *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes.

AL2: The Synod is more church than districts and circuits—it trains pastors and missionaries and oversees doctrine.

AL3: I understand Synod as being church the same way I see districts.

AL4: Yes—Synod is an extension of the local congregation, charged with certain responsibilities on behalf of the congregations.

AL5: Yes—for the same reason I gave above for districts.

APPENDIX TEN

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ALBUQUERQUE TRAINING

MAY 24, 2011

Please answer as clearly and concisely as you can. Thank you for your help.

What do you understand the Gospel Gap Paradigm (GGP) to be?

AL1: A way of looking at the geographic areas of our district to determine the communities or places where people reside where there is currently no visible Word and sacrament ministry. Circuits would identify and build support among congregations.

AL2: Figuratively, the gaps between cell phone areas; literally, the gaps between the churches, the places of proclamation of the Gospel.

AL3: There are areas that aren't being reached with the Gospel (gaps). In order to reach them we need to somehow reach them, even if it is "out of the box."

AL4: Simply looking beyond our congregations to areas and people who need the Gospel available to them but currently are not hearing.

AL5: Those "Gaps" where the Gospel is not being preached or conveyed on an intentional basis.

What is the role of the following entities regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AL1: Determine the needs of community, strategy, progress

AL2: The prime source of knowledge about where new congregations are to be planted and the prime source of people and funds to plant new congregations.

AL3: Boots on the ground, seeing the need of their neighbor

AL4: The knowledge of the need and support for Gospel proclamation beyond themselves

AL5: Mission planting and reaching the lost's main focus should be from the local congregation.

The circuit:

AL1: Mutual support of each other is important. The circuit has a unique perspective of opportunities that may greatly benefit from mutual support.

AL2: An additional source of knowledge and resources

AL3: Keep pastors informed—Pastors keeping needs and opportunities before others in circuit through pastors—possible circuit newsletter

AL4: Identify gaps and encourage and organize to meet the needs of these gap areas.

AL5: The circuit is to support those congregations in the circuit to help local congregations reach their place on this earth with the Gospel

The district:

AL1: The geographic area is vastly expanded. District has resources and knowledge on perhaps determining gaps. Still a major part of the paradigm for missions.

AL2: Encouragement, challenge to act—not so much a resource as circuits and congregations are the resources.

AL3: Support, encouragement and guidance for local work.

AL4: Support and encourage congregations and circuits.

AL5: To help circuits in their helping of the local congregations as well as help local congregations with things that the circuit does not have the resources to provide.

The Synod:

AL1: Main focus is foreign missions.

AL2: Provide pastors and workers to do the leading of the planting work.

AL3: Work internationally, support districts.

AL4: Same

AL5: To provide training for pastors and expertise in mission planting and assisting districts, circuits and local congregations in mission planting and reaching the lost.

How effective are the following entities in accomplishing their roles regarding mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

The local congregation:

AL1: The local congregation often looks inward, and while paying close attention to matters on the “home front” fails to see the mission across the street.

AL2: Largely do nothing or little; so easy to think other, i.e., district, will do it.

AL3: On the verge.

AL4: Most are busy with own problems and functions and are not effective.

AL5: Varies based on the focus of the local congregation.

The circuit:

AL1: Our circuit's effectiveness in working together is limited by the distances that separate us. We seem to be more effective working in small groups of two or three congregations.

AL2: Same—some discussion—maybe—little more.

AL3: Have eyes open and are looking to work across the border. Lutheran Hispanic Missionary Institute.

AL4: We talk about it and not much is done.

AL5: Varies but in the circuits I have been part of, we have looked at possibilities of mission planting and reaching out with the Gospel

The district:

AL1: The district, under the old model, has shown good leadership in identifying and planting or supporting ministries within RMD and beyond (South Africa).

AL2: The point for many years now, but have to work too hard to learn what area congregations already know but about which they do little.

AL3: No Response.

AL4: GGP is a positive in being more effective.

AL5: The district generally is looking to plant missions and the various ways to plant missions even looking outside the box as to how it was done in the past, hence the GGP.

The Synod:

AL1: The Synod's recent downsizing of foreign mission work due to financial strains may be an indicator that new strategies/paradigms are needed on a national level.

AL2: Overseas largely.

AL3: No response.

AL4: I'm not sure.

AL5: I see it more as providing pastors and mission planters a well as come expertise as to how to go about planting missions

How well do the congregations of your circuit *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AL1: In our circuit, three congregations are meeting to talk about new ministries specific to their city. On the east, two congregations are considering a merger with outreach in mind. As a circuit, it is very hard to gather except as pastors at the Winkel.

AL2: Some discussions but are so separated by distance—making cooperative efforts challenging.

AL3: Working better—challenge is to get information from each congregation.

AL4: Distance makes it difficult.

AL5: I think they are working together better all the time.

How well do the circuits of the Rocky Mountain District *work together*, especially in mission planting and reaching the lost in their geographic area?

AL1: I'm not aware, specifically, of any activity among circuits. The current structure doesn't encourage a lot of work together as distances make regular meetings impractical.

AL2: I know very little of how other circuits work.

AL3: Distances in southern region is a factor.

AL4: Not very well.

AL5: I don't know that we have that much interaction with the distances being what they are.

Do you believe that your *local congregation* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes, because the local congregation acts on Christ's command to go and make disciples. We may do so independently at the same time realizing that we are only a part of the larger church.

AL2: Yes—it is where Word and sacrament take place.

AL3: Yes. For the local area but also part of the larger church as we support other congregations in circuit and the “larger” church.

AL4: Yes. It is where the Word of God and the sacraments are given to God's people.

AL5: Yes. Where two or three are gathered in His name there is “Church.”

Do you believe that your *circuit* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes, the circuit is a gathering of local congregations to gather for the sake of fulfilling the Great Commission. An advantage of circuits as church would be increased workers and resources.

AL2: Sort of—the congregation is actually Church but we confess together, mutually care for one another.

AL3: Yes, because it reaches those that, especially those “churches” that are trying to get started or a foot hold that can’t do it by themselves.

AL4: Yes—the circuit exists to serve and support the local congregation.

AL5: I see it as an extension of the Church as a group of congregations.

Do you believe that the *Rocky Mountain Districts* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes, for many of the same reasons above: 1) a conglomeration of local congregations; 2) under the banner of Christ; 3) duly appointed leadership; 4) structure.

AL2: Sort of—same as for circuits.

AL3: I see them as Paul—making sure theology is right.

AL4: Yes—another level of the previous question.

AL5: Yes, in that it is ultimately made up and supported by Christians. The Word is preached and the sacraments are rightly administered in the various congregations that make up the district.

Do you believe that *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* is the “Church” (*ecclesia* as theologically understood)? Why or why not?

AL1: Yes, many of the same reasons as above.

AL2: A bit more in that it is the keeper of the doctrinal standard, prepares workers, send overseas missionaries.

AL3: I see them as Paul—making sure theology is right.

AL4: Yes—the Synod is an extension of the local congregation—they provide education for fulltime church workers, they help and encourage missions, and provide worship and Christian materials and the like.

AL5: Same as above.

APPENDIX ELEVEN

PowerPoint Presentation

Local Congregations and Circuits in the GGP

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS AND CIRCUITS IN THE GGP

The Gospel Gap Paradigm

be My
witnesses
in
Jerusalem

□ In your circuit, are there:

- Cities and towns in which there is no Lutheran presence so that the lost have no place close to them?
- People groups out to whom no Lutheran congregation is presently reaching and so the lost have no one preaching in their language?
- People going to hell because they haven't yet heard the Gospel?

We want to be Christ's witnesses

Not by
might,
nor by
power,
but by My
Spirit,
says the
LORD

- Identify those geographic areas where there is no Lutheran presence
- Strategize how to use resources within the circuit—congregations, pastors, other called workers—to stand in the gap
- Plant missions/preaching stations in those areas/for those groups so they might hear and develop the means to fund and sustain these missions locally

Getting Started

first, sit
down and
count the
cost.

□ Starting with you, the circuit pastors and your congregations, because you know your region best

- Where is there no place to hear the Gospel?
- What the congregations in your circuit can do
- What resources might be needed
- You have been chosen by your circuit to serve as Circuit Mission Agents—What does this mean?

Circuit Mission Agents

- Work with congregations in your circuit to identify potential mission opportunities—these may be new or existing
- Work with congregations in your circuit to identify resources to support these mission opportunities
 - May be that a congregation or several congregations team together to support financially and in other way
 - May be that circuit congregations contribute as a group to support the opportunity
 - May be that your circuit submits a proposal to the District for inclusion in the next year's budget

Congregations and Circuits

- The Congregation is the location where God locates His gifts—Word and Sacraments with the Spirit at the altar, pulpit and font
- The Congregation is given the tasks of handling the Gospel of forgiveness (John 20) and bearing witness to the Gospel and teaching the nations (Matthew 28)
- Congregations gather into circuits not just for administrative purposes but to work together for the Gospel—mercy and witness—in the geographical area where they have been located

APPENDIX TWELVE

PowerPoint Presentation

How Do I Serve as a CMA?

How do I serve as a CMA?

The basics of being a Circuit Mission Agent

Approach your Circuit

- How well do the pastors and congregations in your circuit work together?
 - How can the Circuit Counselor help?
- How engaged are the pastors and congregations with the idea of identifying and supporting existing or new missions at the circuit level?
 - Maybe only one or a few congregations?

Beginings

Identify the existing or new mission

- An existing mission is one in your circuit's area that previously has been funded only by the District that now your circuit can assist
- A new mission would be an outreach to a people group or geographical region not presently being reached with the Gospel
 - Identify
 - Initiate
 - Resource
- Any decision should have the support or at least the agreement of the circuit congregations

Identify

- Seek demographic information for your circuit's region to determine where growth is happening or the location of people groups
- Seek county and city plans to anticipate growth in the future
- Meet with circuit congregations and ask which areas/groups they do not or would like to reach

Initiate

Is there a congregation that would like to take the lead in planting or is this a plant undertaken by several or all the churches in your circuit?

- If one congregation is leading, work in the circuit to offer support
- If the plant is a joint project, work to insure good communication between all involved

Initiate (continued)

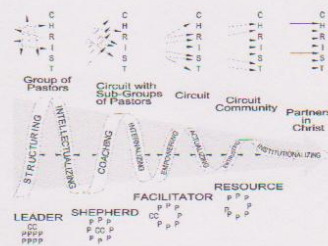
- Mother-daughter
- Satellite
 - One Congregation
 - Joint Effort
 - Sharing Resources
- Missionary-at-Large

APPENDIX THIRTEEN

PowerPoint Presentation

Working Together as a Circuit

Working Together as a Circuit



Think about your circuit

	1 Group of Pastors	2 Circuit with Sub-Groups of Pastors	3 Circuit	4 Circuit Community	5 Partners in Christ
GIVING FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think negative feedback is fun See if someone else will give feedback Write to third party Feedback is sarcastic or made out to be humorous Use negative body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold back for fear of retaliation Hint, insinuate or imply consequences Try to impose change on others Use scripture as examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to use scripture and confessions Coach and nurture other circuit members Goal to improve circuit Use scripture as examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled at use of scripture and confessions Constructive understanding Timely feedback Exchange of differences for betterment of all Synod members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback adheres to scripture Real time, full time Positive feedback Exchange of differences for betterment of all Synod members

How is feedback/a new idea received?

	1 Group of Pastors	2 Circuit with Sub-Groups of Pastors	3 Circuit	4 Circuit Community	5 Partners in Christ
RECEIVING FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denial Transfer blame Feel like victim Rationalize Defensive Appear to comply Retaliates Use negative body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not agree but will comply Will listen but will not hear Is suspicious of feedback intent Tell me only what is good Tolerate feedback Relationship may not heal from pain and stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience feedback willingly Ask for help on how to receive feedback better Take action Healing of wounds may take time Hope relationship will survive pain and stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek productive feedback Thank you for the feedback Take positive action Open, honest discussions Relationship will endure in spite of pain and stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively seek feedback from all Synod members Stimulate positive creativity Trust Relationship will grow through experience of pain

Your Opportunity as a CMA

	1 Group of Pastors	2 Circuit with Sub-Groups of Pastors	3 Circuit	4 Circuit Community	5 Partners in Christ
LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not recognize learning as part of the circuit meeting "I come, I meet, I go home" Sees circuit meeting as an impediment to getting minister work done Too busy to learn at circuit meetings Believes learning is the responsibility of the individual pastor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas for circuit learning Some circuit members understand need for circuit learning Conciliatory to circuit learning Does not recognize difference between individual pastor learning and circuit learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to learn together Will schedule time for circuit learning All circuit members understand need for circuit learning Circuit recognizes benefits of circuit learning Circuit identifies gaps between where they are and where they need to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circuit takes responsibility for their own learning Understands circuit learning is tool for unity and enjoys the challenge Contributes to improvement of circuit learning Recognizes circuit learning will get them out of "righting" mode 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively seeks learning opportunities in and out of circuit Realizes learning to long-term Synod member unity Sees responsibility for teaching others commensurate with their own learning Turns every experience into an opportunity for teaching

Your Task as a CMA in Mission

	1 Group of Pastors	2 Circuit with Sub-Groups of Pastors	3 Circuit	4 Circuit Community	5 Partners in Christ
PROBLEM SOLVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uneven Participation Avoidance Expect others to solve problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to solve problems Focus on symptoms Brainstorm solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to define problems Use some problem-solving techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilfully solves problems in a timely fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive continuous improvement

APPENDIX FOURTEEN

PowerPoint Presentation

Introducing the Gospel Gap Paradigm

(Sent to Circuit Counselors in 2010)

Introducing the Gospel Gap Paradigm

- Like cell phone coverages, there are "gaps" in your circuit where the Gospel is not heard
 - *How then will they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*
 - Romans 10: 14, 15
- How will these 'gaps' be covered?
 - The Rocky Mountain District introduces the Gospel Gap Paradigm

The Gospel Gap Paradigm

be My witnesses in Jerusalem

- In your circuit, are there:
 - Cities and towns in which there is no Lutheran presence so that the lost have no place close to them?
 - People groups out to whom no Lutheran congregation is presently reaching and so the lost have no one preaching in their language?
 - People going to hell because they haven't yet heard the Gospel?

We want to be Christ's witnesses

Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD

- Identify those geographic areas where there is no Lutheran presence
- Strategize how to use resources within the circuit—congregations, pastors, other called workers—to stand in the gap
- Plant missions/preaching stations in those areas/for those groups so they might hear and develop the means to fund and sustain these missions locally

Getting Started

first sit down and count the cost

- Starting with you, the circuit pastors and your congregations, because you know your region best
 - Where is there no place to hear the Gospel
 - What the congregations in your circuit can do
 - What resources might be needed
- We would ask you to elect one from among yourselves to serve as the Circuit Mission Liaison (we're open to a better name)

The Circuit Mission Liaison

And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, know the hearts of all, show which one of these..."

- Selected by the circuit
- Will gather together with the representatives from all the circuits for training
 - Learn ideas/models for planting
 - Trained to use demographic data to identify potential sites and people groups
 - Trained to partner with congregations in your circuit and teach them how to plant missions
- Work with the District and Circuit to identify funding resources locally and regionally

What's next?

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- Report the name of the person your circuit selects as the Circuit Mission Liaison to Pastor Jeff Shearier or to President Golter
- Invite this Liaison to have a regular spot in your circuit meeting agenda to raise the brother's awareness about Christ's mission and those areas/people groups yet to be reached in your region
- Lead your circuit brothers to think regionally rather than parochially about their circuit and to support the planting of new missions together as a circuit

APPENDIX FIFTEEN

Mission Plan Submitted by the Sandia Circuits of New Mexico

October 1, 2011

LORD OF LIFE

LUTHERAN CHURCH

MISSOURI SYNOD

Mission Plan

God Cares About You is an ongoing outreach of evangelism in Albuquerque and beyond, under the auspices of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Grants, NM. God Cares About You is now working in southeast Albuquerque in order to establish a new church there, with a proposed name of Lord of Life Lutheran Church, although that name could be changed.

Vision Statement: **Lord of Life** will develop into a self-sustaining member-congregation of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod by the year 2021 or earlier.

Mission Statement: Through the proclamation of Jesus Christ to the people of southeast Albuquerque, current mission activities will grow into a preaching station and then a self-sustaining congregation with an emphasis on loving God, loving each other, and reaching out to others with God's Word.

Values Statement: Helping our neighbor in time of need is good, but eternal gain is only through the proclamation of the Word of God, the working of the Holy Spirit, and the communion of the saints. Every person helped through **Lord of Life** is cause for celebration. Yet the greater treasure is every

person God brings to Baptism, the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and to the regular fellowship of Divine Worship.

Target Area: Albuquerque, east of Louisiana and south of Lomas (Zip Code 87123 and beyond).

Demographic motivations: There is no LC-MS church in this zip code of 42,000 people. Discipling people in this area is proving successful.

Future Milestones:

Continue and grow ***God Cares About You*** Thursday and Friday Bible Studies, Back-to-Work program, and Youth Group.

Oct. 2011 Begin a Spanish-language Bible Study.

Sept. 2012 Arrange for a facility and location for church start-up and future work hopefully near Eubank and Central streets.

Oct. 2012 Establish a SE Albuquerque preaching station and begin catechesis.

Jan. 2013 Start Confirmation and Divine Service (Lord's Supper), served by Pastor Mark Kluzek as missionary pastor sent by Mt. Calvary, Grants.

April 2013 Request District approval of Congregation name, constitution and bylaws, and membership in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

Oct. 2015 Extend a Divine Call to the first pastor.

Funding Plan: (See attached budget for details)

Work with the Sandia North and South Circuits, local congregations, and their members, and identify other supporters, to raise \$12,000 toward 2012 costs.

Propose to the Sandia Circuits Forum a Circuit-wide Reformation Mission Festival in October of 2012 and perhaps regularly thereafter. Request at least \$12,000 from the Festival offering be directed to **Lord of Life**. (The last Circuits' Mission Festival raised \$25,000.)

Request partial support through the Gospel Gap Paradigm (GGP) program of the Rocky Mountain District. First year request is \$24,000, with the intent of this request being reduced by \$2,400 (10% of the original request) each year.

Joyfully grow the offerings of congregation members as God moves hearts to thankfulness.

Continue to thank God for the support already being received from local congregations and further develop such support.

Establish a Board of Directors to oversee finances, track progress, report to the Circuits' Forum and District, and transition management to the new congregation, once established. Until the Board is established, Mt. Calvary, Grants will oversee funds.

Blessed SE Albuquerque Successes:

August 2009-present Bible Study at Village Inn (Juan Tabo and Lomas), with up to 12 attending.

December 2010 Pastor Kluzek's work recognized by the Sandia Circuits' Pastors.

May 2011-present Back-to-Work program which brings the unemployed to volunteer at local human care programs. While there, they receive household goods and assistance with finding employment. A weekly program with as many as 17 are participating.

May 2011-present Bible Study at 126 Pennsylvania, with up to 20 attending.

Sept. 2011-present Youth Group with 7 youth participating.

Sept. 2011 Steering Committee formed as the result of discussions within the Sandia Circuits, to work on the new church plan and work with the GGP.

Pastor Kluzek, Tracy and Kevin on a Good Friday walk, sharing the Good News.

APPENDIX SIXTEEN

Assessment of the Large Start Model by Church Planter Dustin Lappe

The Large Start Model

As Implemented by Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Aurora, CO

Positives

I think the basic premise behind the Large Start Model is good. Start strong. See yourself as a church from the very beginning. Be self-sufficient (self-sustaining) as soon as possible. All of which is to allow you to reach the lost and make disciples. The fact that it is a model that has a history is a positive. It is being used by church planters. It has been effective in places. There is a strategic plan that accompanies it. Resources are available.

Negatives

The Large Start Model is costly. Meaning there is a large start-up cost. For us it was about \$100,000 before even launching. In fact, we launched worship on October 4, 2009 with \$16 in the bank (talk about a test of faith). While the Large Start Model seems to work for some church bodies, for whatever reason, I have not heard any success stories in the LC-MS (at least not based on how the model is intended to work).

Asset or Liability

Building a launch team, raising funds, forming a worship team, developing your children's ministry – these are all critical pieces to the Large Start Model. If done right, and if done timely, all will work to serve as an asset. But if they are not in place prior to launching BIG, they will in turn work against the model making it a liability. From my personal experience all are challenging in their own way. Building a launch team takes time, and time costs money. I think if the church planter is from the area (unlike we were) it would help in the process because he would already have relationships which leads to connections. Of the church plants I know that were successful starting large (none of which are Lutheran) they had the common theme of church planters returning to cities they (sometimes including their wives) were from. Most church planters I know don't see themselves as fund raisers. I know I didn't. And yet this was an important piece to being able to start large. While we had financial support from both the Synod and the District, we were asked to raise \$40,000 to help fund the launch.

The Large Start Model adds a little more pressure to forming a worship team and developing your children's ministry in that it has to be functioning like an established church. The idea is to

be excellent in everything from the start. It's believed that if you start strong, you have a greater chance of growing strong. It all sounds great.

But if the model works, which you're hoping it does, you need to have the people and resources in place to sustain large numbers of adults and kids. This means even though you are a new start you need to be acting like a "grown-up" church, which I think is difficult for a lot of church plants (trying to be something they are not).

Again, if done right this will work as an asset. But if done poorly it will work against the model making it a liability. We did NOT start large. Had we, I don't believe we would have even been able to sustain the numbers because we did not have the people resources in place (not from a lack of trying though). The numbers I was given to shoot for were having 500 at our first worship service. We had 140 (40-50 of which were friends of people on the launch team who had no intention of joining the church, people from out of state who came to help the launch team, the launch team themselves, and people that knew the story and wanted to see what it was like but again had no intention of being a part of the church). That means 90-100 were there (a few short of 500).

What that means is that we spent a lot of money to start large, money we could have used to help us move forward. Not starting large put a huge strain on us from a financial standpoint. One of the outcomes was me having to take on a second job, something that was not part of our original plan. If not by the grace of God we would have had to close the doors. All that being said, God has worked in the midst of everything and allowed us to carry on, reminding me that He is BIGGER than any church planting model.

If you were to ask me if I would use the Large Start Model again to plant a church my answer would have to be no. I just feel like there are too many things working against the model. As I said, if the pieces are all in place it has the chance to be an asset. But from my experience that's every difficult to do. And so by moving forward you are only setting it up to fail.

APPENDIX SEVENTEEN

Oklahoma District Mission Executive, The Rev. Lenny Busch III's evaluation of the Large Start Model Large Start Model

My first acquaintance with the Large Start Model (LSM) was mediated by Rev. Mark Larson, then serving as Mission Executive for the Rocky Mountain District of the LC-MS, and Billy Hornsby, developer of the ARC (Association of Related Churches) church planting model upon which the LSM would be based. The Oklahoma District was among the first few pilot Districts which agreed to experiment with the model.

Initial Understandings

The foundational components of the model include:

- Greater-than-normal investment funding by supporting congregations and/or judicatories at the front to ensure a target market impression of high quality/excellence from the very beginning of public exposure, and maximize to potential for rapid growth and measurable success.
- Decisive and visionary pastoral leadership (possibly identified locally and developed through the soon to emerge SMP – Specific Ministry Pastor program)
- Strong team-delegation/diffusion ethos,
- Emphasis on self-replicating small groups to exploit the potential of relationship networks.
- Delayed launch worship service until a large critical mass was engaged in small groups and could provide a “Large Start.”

An ideal timeline with numerical benchmarks would proceed something like this:

- Secure a pastoral leader with the appropriate skills and provide office space in proximity to the target area.
- Quickly gather core ministry teams (involving from 25-50 individuals, many already active members “borrowed” from related association congregations) to cover functions such as:
 - Governance
 - Outreach
 - Public relations
 - Small groups
 - Launch Service
 - Worship
- Begin accelerated development of small group ministries (to involve 100-200 individuals, many of whom may be unchurched from target groups in the community).
- Schedule a launch service with a minimum expected attendance of 250-300 or more, at least 50% of whom would already be involved in core ministry teams or small groups.
 - Secure a rented facility with capacity for that attendance.

- In order to boost the numbers, attendance at the launch service would include, in addition to the already involved 50%, other members of related churches, as well as targeted members of the unchurched community.
- Continue weekly worship – allowing for as much as a 50% decline in attendance after the initial “big deal,” the new congregation would still be averaging 150-200 + in worship
- Move quickly to complete self-sustainability within 18-36 months.

Case Studies (Mostly Second Hand)

Of the original enlistees to serve as pilot districts, I am aware of 4 that followed through quickly: Pacific Southwest, Nebraska, Rocky Mountain, and Oklahoma. More recently, I heard that the Mid-South District also made an effort using the LSM. Each District followed a different trajectory and each experienced a different level of success.

- From what I heard, the Pacific Southwest effort targeted the Hispanic community in the Palm Springs area. It was the first to launch, and had over 1000 people at the “launch service.” This turned out to be more of a one-time community picnic, however, and, from what I understand, never amounted to much as an ongoing congregation.
- Nebraska seemed to be the slowest to pull the trigger, remaining with an evangelist/planting pastor who focused on developing small group Bible studies. At a conference last year I heard that several hundred people were regularly participating in these small groups and that, when the launch service was finally held, it was well attended, and that a thriving new congregation was the result.
- The Rocky Mountain District effort, as I understand it, benefited from the confluence of several favorable factors. The first was a new, growing, suburban target area with demography of receptive market segments (with even surprisingly high recognition and favorability ratings for “Lutheran”). The second was a fertile partnership between the District and a large congregation in the area that was supportive of the planting effort in many ways (almost prototypical of the “Related Churches” described in the ARC model). That factor flowed on into third and fourth elements: provision of engaged core group members and the formative supervision of suitable candidate for the pastoral leadership role, through the vicarage program.
- It is worth mentioning the Mid-South effort at this point, because of several distinctive similarities to the work in Rocky Mountain. One Synodical executive remarked that this provided the one example of the LSM that could be called successful without any reservation. It also combined wholehearted support of a large congregation in partnership with the District. It also made effective use of a gifted pastoral leader who was locally identified and developed. It also effectively targeted a specific demographic market segment prominent in the area, although, perhaps uniquely, a segment not often successfully targeted by churches of any description.
- Finally, I come to the work in the Oklahoma District. Here, I can speak in the first person of individual experience, and describe what I have learned from what did not work.
 - I started by asking congregations adjacent to areas with growing populations to identify possible SMP candidates who might be developed for ARC (pre LSM) church planting efforts in those areas.

- Next I tried to forge a partnership between two congregations, both medium sized to large, which had expressed interest in the same target area. After a series of informal meetings, it became clear that one of the congregations was not interested in a partnering, but in an independent venture. The other congregation seemed interested, and even provided a candidate (a member of the congregation's staff) who eventually enrolled in the SMP program. As it turned out, however, the voiced support was only lukewarm, and quickly evaporated.
(Lesson 1: Make sure all partners are wholeheartedly on board).
- This was still about a year and a half before the SMP program actually opened. It was not until after commitments had already been made that resources like the Gallup Church Planter Survey and Center for U.S. Mission Church Planter Assessment Process became available.
(Lesson 2: Make sure candidates for church planting positions are fully vetted).
- The ARC planning model was followed for efforts leading up to and beyond a launch service. I concurred that the Oklahoma context justified a reduction to the low end of numerical benchmarks. Unfortunately my misgivings about having only 25 people involved in small groups did not move me to apply the brakes firmly enough. When the launch service attracted only 60 people, I began to realize that I had made some mistakes.
(Lesson 3: When using the LSM, hold fast to numerical benchmarks)
Needless to say, average attendance for this project has never risen beyond 30 people per week.
(Lesson 4: Estimate the current vitality and future viability of a project based specifically on the benchmark of small group participation).
- In spite of this, I maintained the District commitment for “ambitious funding” for this mission start, budgeting as much over a 2 year period as I would for the first 5 years of a more traditional start. I cannot call the project a failure – its results are similar to what I would expect from a traditional approach: the congregation has chartered and continues to meet (although at a third location and in a different part of town than the original target area), and the candidate has been ordained. When it became evident that LSM results were not forthcoming, however, I put the brakes on the District funding so that, now entering the sixth year of the effort, the actual expenditures have just about averaged out to about what they otherwise might have been.
(Lesson 5: Tie release of funds to actual benchmark achievement).

ARC/LSM in Oklahoma: Take 2

“Live and learn . . . and keep on learning!” At the last District Convention I was presented with a resolution from the pastors of a Circuit identifying an area that was ripe for a new mission start (actually, the area has been on District radar as “one of the next spots we will need to plant a church” for the past 25 years – there are 3 such areas in Oklahoma, but given the complexities of development patterns in Oklahoma, the *kairos* for each spot has always seemed to remain, “just 5 years from now,”) Over

the next several months I met with the pastors for several planning sessions. It became apparent that, not only did they have a general location and a commitment to partnership from their congregations; they also had a candidate in mind – an ordained individual in the area who had been serving vacancies. “Time to apply lessons I have learned,” I thought. In spite of misgivings about the candidate, this is how I have proceeded:

- (Lesson 1: Make sure all partners are wholeheartedly on board). The congregations of the Circuit already had a bank account for the project to which they were contributing.
- (Lesson 2: Make sure candidates for church planting positions are fully vetted). I had the candidate take the Gallup Church Planter Inventory (he scored “Recommended”) and sent him to the C4USM Church Planter Assessment Center (he emerged both “Recommended” and with a “Mission Initiation Plan” in his hands). Skepticism about his eventual effectiveness continued to be voiced by people who had worked with him, however – “Some people are just able to figure out how to score well on those assessments,” one commented.
- (Lesson 3: When using the LSM, hold fast to numerical benchmarks) So I provide a commentary on the “Mission Initiation Plan” which more sharply articulated numerical bench marks and achievement timelines.
- (Lesson 4: Estimate the current vitality and future viability of a project based specifically on the benchmark of small group participation). The first next step for the measure of success and a green light to go further is 10 small groups with at least 7 regular participants in each.
- (Lesson 5: Tie release of funds to actual benchmark achievement). My 2011 and upcoming 2012 budget proposals call for a staged release of funding, contingent upon the achievement of specific bench marks.

I am appending my commentary on the Mission Initiation Plan and prospectus for 2012 below.

Piedmont Mission Initiation Plan (aka *Gift of God Lutheran Church*) 2012 Budget Proposal, Oklahoma District LC-MS

I am trying to anticipate funding needs for this project in time for the budget process of the Oklahoma District, LC-MS. In the absence of specific funding requests, I am going to make some educated guesses based upon the *Mission Initiation Plan* submitted by Rev. -----.
This effort is intended to be both encouraging and realistic.

- Due to Rev. ----- commitments to serve as a vacancy pastor, implementation of many *mile-markers* in the first, or *Conception* stage, have legitimately been delayed.
- District funding, released at a rate of \$500 per month during the last quarter of 2010 and calendar year 2011 to offset the amount paid by supporting Kingfisher Circuit congregations in compensation for Rev. ----- development efforts, will continue to be released in 2012. Up to **\$6,000**
- Of the *Conception* stage *mile-markers* listed in the *Mission Initiation Plan*, the following (with added detail) seem to me to be critical next-steps:
 - Initiation of small group Bible studies or *fractal teams* is essential. In targeting the first 100 prospects, toward the goal of a launch service with more than 100 attending, it makes sense to ask that at least 10 groups of at least 7 participants each, exclusive of leaders, (or 70, total) be started. This would also provide a worthy measure of progress. For each group of at least 7, meeting weekly (or at least monthly) an additional \$750 per-annum, scaled on a monthly basis, would be released. Up to **\$7,500**
 - The importance of *Empowering Leadership* is a given. It also would be helpful to have the distinction between *fractal teams*, *ministry teams*, and the *launch team* defined.
 - One possible order of unfolding begins with the formation of an initial team to assist the *Empowering Leader*, Rev. -----, and move ahead. (Is this the *ministry focus group*? The *ministry team*? The *launch team*?)
 - In any case, such a group would help identify the point-leaders for the core ministries. Once in place, these ministry leaders would be charged with drawing together teams of 3-8 individuals. Recruited, perhaps, from the small Bible study groups or *fractal teams*, these would become the *ministry teams*
 - Under the *Empowering Leadership* model, the members of the *ministry teams* would serve as the core of the *launch team* which would work regularly and collaboratively with the *Empowering Leader* toward a launch service. Once these teams have been formed and begun their work, an additional \$550 per month would be released. Up to **\$6,600**

Brief Recapitulation & Summary

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Pastoral Stipend/Retainer (<i>Empowering Leadership</i>) | \$6,000 |
| 2. Small Group Bible Studies (10 groups, 7 participants & leader minimum) | \$7,500 |
| 3. <u><i>Ministry Teams</i> and <i>Launch Team</i> formed & operational</u> | \$6,600 |

Total Proposal for 2012: \$20,100

This proposal does not include funding for facility rental and ongoing operational costs in the current budget cycle. If progress is made so that these elements become necessary before the end of the cycle, a separate proposal may be brought before the District Board of Directors.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FROM MISSION INITIATION PLAN

By Rev. -----

Mission Strategy (Selectively Summarized)

Entrepreneurial Model

- Start large: use of a “launch team.”
- Work to get more than 100 at the first worship service.

Empowering Leadership

- Understands that the work of developing the new mission is not theirs alone; has the ability to give work away; and listens to people and empowers them for lay ministry.

Inspiring Worship

- Worship team works hard at developing quality worship.

Building Genuine Community

- Before launch date, most work to be spent on contacting people, and bringing them into an established system of lay-led Bible study groups (i.e., small groups).

Structure using Fractal Teaming

Organize around Small Groups

Conception Mile-markers (~~January-September 2010~~) **(Priority Items Highlighted)**

- Attend Basic Church Planter Training*
- **Completed community survey**
- **Interviewed community leaders**
- Demographics completed*
- Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Core values developed(*)
- Statement of faith developed
- Mission Initiation Plan written*
- Permissions for planting project secured(*)
- Start date confirmed

- Bank accounts established*
- Done receipting procedures confirmed
- Liability insurance secured
- 3-year Budget developed(*)
- **Ministry focus group defined**
- **Ministry team recruited (Music, Children's Ministry, and Small Group Directors)**
- Worship team enlisted
- Church name selected*
- Logo created
- Stationary and business cards ordered
- Worship style clarified
- **Leadership training meetings planned**
- **Small group leaders trained**
- Small group philosophy clarified
- Newsletter publication scheduled
- Partnership churches enlisted*
- Partnership covenants completed
- **First home Bible study begun***
- First 100 prospects identified
- **Launch Team enlisted**
- **Launch Team formed**
- **Launch Team covenanted**
- Potential meeting place identified
- Meeting place leased

* Completed task

(*) Task to be revisited

ADDENDUM

PIEDMONT PROPOSAL 2012

- Start multiple groups (two additional groups by end of January, 2012)
- Identify, survey, interview community leaders
- “Borrow” members of congregations around target area

APPENDIX EIGHTEEN

Assessment of the Large Start Model by Church Planter Jeremy Jacoby

Family of Christ Lutheran Church

Report to the District Board on Large Start Model – 1/26/10

Top 10 List of things that “worked.”

1. The basic idea can work assuming you have the time and money to start large.
2. Marketing – very effective in a number of areas
3. Keep It Simple – Focus on 3 things – for FOC it was Worship, Children’s Ministry and Small Groups
4. Have everything “in place” – this worked well in the beginning
5. Unified/recognizable “brand” – everything matched, had a purpose and looked professional
6. FOC was very successful at reaching the target audience – for FOC it was “hurting hearts.”
7. Be part of the community – social outreach, community events, etc.
8. Tracking – what worked well and what didn’t. Direct mail and personal invitation – both led to the website
9. Paperless communication
10. Launch team training for transition

Top 10 List of things that need to “improve.”

1. Don’t launch too soon – be patient for the right place and time. Be committed to the right location
2. More of a local and District partnership. Perhaps a “sponsor” congregation or even better a “sponsor” circuit. Involve early and often
3. Use a Pastor who is already in the circuit
4. Have a backup plan – exit strategy that is as well thought out as the church plant model
5. DO NOT EXPECT THAT THE PLANTER WILL BE THE PASTOR. While this may be the case I believe it is a mistake to go in assuming it will be true. It would be better to assume the opposite
6. A “fast” start will require help, perhaps a sabbatical. Seriously consider planting with two church workers
7. Along with success “mentors” have some who have “failed” as well
8. Be realistic about your target. If you use an “attraction” model then you have to be willing to maintain it or cut it right away
9. Pastor should live and be part of the community FIRST!
10. Do not Charter too early

Make regular “debriefings” part of the process. Especially in the cases that “fail.”

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